TRAVELS

WITH THE

AFGHAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION



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1 SIR PETER LUMSDEN. 2 SIR JOSEPH RIDGEWAY.
3 CAPT. C. E. YATE. 4 GENERAL KOMAROFF.

England and Russia Face to Face in Asia

TRAVELS

WITH THE

AFGHAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION

BY

LIEUTENANT A. C. YATE

BOMBAY STAFF CORPS

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

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PREFACE.

I HAVE made the basis of my book the letters I wrote from the Afghan Boundary Commission camp to the 'Pioneer,' 'Daily Telegraph,' and other journals. I have thought fit to preserve them rather than endeavour to rewrite a more connected narrative, partly because that which is written under the vivid impressions of the moment gives often a truer conception of events than a carefully considered narrative written a year later, and partly because my official occupation left me little leisure for literary work. I have also given a summary of the work of the British Boundary Commission both as a whole and individually, and I have stated my views of the respective positions of England and Russia in Central Asia as affected by the events to which the despatch of the Boundary Commission has given rise.

The maps and illustrations now published are illustrative of places that have never before been made the subject of the artist's pencil or the photographer's camera. The map of Central Asia, Persia, and Afghanistan is based on the surveys carried out by Major Holdich, and Captains Gore, Peacocke, and Hon. M. G. Talbot. The plan of the Russian and Afghan positions at Panjdeh was drawn up by Sergeant (now Lieutenant, 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards) Galindo of the Intelligence branch, on information furnished by Captain C. E. Yate.

It may possibly be expected that I should say something of the frontier as it has been now demarcated from the Hari Rud to the Oxus. I have, however, several reasons for not touching on this theme: firstly, because I wish this book to be a record of my own personal experiences, and not hearsay reports; and secondly, because I understand that an officer now with the Boundary Commission, and who knows as much of the frontier and its worth as any man, intends on his return to give the world the benefit of his opinion about it.

This book is intended to be not only a record of the movements of the Afghan Boundary Commission, but also a description of travels through country that is practically unknown to the civilised world. I allude, of course, to the route taken by Colonel Ridgeway and his party from Nushki to Herat, and to Badkis generally. A solitary journey from Herat to the Black Sea, after leaving the Commission, enabled me to obtain some information on more than one point of interest to England—such as concerning the demarcation of the Russo-Persian boundary, which I have given as an Appendix. To suppose that the Russo-Persian frontier, as recently settled, will long remain a fixture, would be mere self-delusion. I cannot find any distinct definition of the frontier drawn from Kalat-i-Nadiri to Sarakhs, and it is just in that quarter that rumour credits Russia with further aggressive designs. One of the most significant signs of the times is the proposed construction of a *chaussée* from Ashkabad to Mashhad. That is the highroad of Russian access to Herat, and it is therefore not surprising that Russia should early develop an interest in it.

A. C. YATE.

SIMLA, 12*th June* 1886.

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OF THE

AFGHAN FRONTIER COMMISSION.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATIONS.

THE intense national interest that the Afghan Frontier Commission awakened in the early part of 1885 is a very marked contrast to the *mélange* of indifference and ill-will that it aroused in the autumn of 1884. In England the feeling was one of indifference—indifference arising from ignorance of the important issues at stake; in India it was one of ill-will—the ill-will of disappointment and jealousy. It was only natural; for every officer of ambition and spirit longed to be one of the chosen few, and who a more suitable victim for their chagrin at failure than those who had succeeded?

While the public, then, was indifferent or ill-disposed, the members of the Commission were each toiling in their respective spheres. The preparations of the Intelligence, Survey, Geological, Botanical, and other scientific Departments represented with the Commission, were in the main confined to their own particular branches. The escort, both infantry and cavalry, had only themselves to look after. It was on the

Foreign Department, and on Major Rind, the officer in whose single personality were united the duties of Commissariat, Transport, and Treasury officer of the Commission, that the brunt of preparation fell. On them devolved the provision of tents, mess stores, mess servants, warm clothing for all ranks of the escort and followers, camp furniture, horses and ponies for those *attachés* and subordinates entitled to them, commissariat supplies for some 1200 mouths for a year (except the staples of life, which the Amir undertook to provide—such as flour, rice, grain, forage, &c., &c.), transport (1300 camels, 100 mules, and 250 ponies were provided to start with), and treasure (a large amount was taken in Russian gold). In the case of the political officers, these duties were in addition to those more specially appropriate to their department.

Apart from the susceptibilities of the Amir and the questionable tolerance of the Afghans, the passage of the Beluch desert was the hardest *crux* before the Commission; and to solve it, Mr H. S. Barnes of the Bengal Civil Service and Captain Maitland of the Intelligence branch were deputed. The Beluchistan agency was looked to, to furnish information about the routes from Quetta and the Bolan across Beluchistan to the Helmund, near Rudbar; but it was not till Captain Maitland, assisted by one or more native subordinates of the Beluchistan agency deputed by Sir Robert Sandeman, had personally explored the several rival routes, that a decision was arrived at. To Sir Robert Sandeman, Mr Barnes, and other officials of the Beluchistan agency, the Commission owes much, for the provision of camel transport, supplies, guides, and apparatus for carrying water, and for the general facilitation of its march to the Helmund. The efficiency of the material supplied, however, left something to be desired. Valuable assistance was rendered by the Afghan officials in the provision of water and supplies near the Helmund. With assistance readily afforded by the Beluch and Afghan chieftains, and owing to the care with which Colonel Ridgeway ensured the satisfactory completion of way provision essential to success, the march of the Commission to the Helmund was carried out without the slightest casualty.

CHAPTER II.

FROM RINDLI TO NUSHKI.

RINDLI, *31st August.*

THE nucleus of the Afghan Boundary Commission has at last been formed here. The escort of 200 sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers under Major Bax, with Captain Heath and Lieutenant Drummond, and with Dr Charles in medical charge, arrived here in two trains on the 29th and 30th respectively. Captain Yate and Lieutenant the Hon. M. G. Talbot, R.E., arrived at Jacobabad on the evening of the 29th, and were followed by Dr Owen on the 30th. I joined them there, and we all came on to Rindli on the latter date, arriving about 10 P.M. Naturally at that hour there was nothing to do but to unload such of our baggage as was indispensably necessary to our comfort, and to retire to rest in the Government bungalow. After a hot journey of eight hours across the "Put," we felt it our duty to try and do justice to the meal which the messman here had prepared for us. A very few mouthfuls, however, sufficed to blunt the edge of an appetite dulled by the heat, and we preferred rather to do justice to the niceness of our gastronomic tastes by judicious abstention. Happily ice and aerated waters were plentiful; and so, solaced by a peg and a cheroot, we retired. In this climate, indeed, ice, and not bread, may justly be styled the staff of life. It appears that the 11th Bengal Lancers were on this occasion provided with no ice. Why? In May 1881, when the Kandahar force was withdrawn, ice was provided in abundance for all troops, whether European or native, along

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the entire route from Pir Chauki to Karachi, Lahore, or whatever might be the destination of the troops. One regiment of native infantry that had only to travel some 400 miles from the terminus at Pir Chauki was provided with 1800 lb. of ice to allay the thirst and mitigate the heat which, it was feared, might prove too much for them. There is little difference between the heat then and the heat now, and yet even the officers of the 11th Bengal Lancers were without ice. One of them described to us the magic effect which the sight of the word "Ice," written in capitals on the ice-waggon which accompanies every mail-train on the Indus Valley State Railway, wrought upon him at Rohri, opposite Sukkur, on the Indus. As their troop-train came in, the mail for Lahore was just leaving. Reclining hot and weary in his carriage, suddenly *ice* loomed before his vision. In a moment he was up and half out of the carriage, shouting "Ice! for God's sake, some ice!" There must have been a heartrending sincerity in the tone of his voice, for it penetrated to the soft corner of a native's heart, and he, *mirabile dictu*, rushed to the ice-box and threw out a large block on the platform as the mail passed out of the station. That native received no payment, and knew he could receive no payment. I should like to know that native. I feel that his acquaintance would do any man honour, even the Good Samaritan.

The heat here is much greater than I anticipated after the —for this locality—late heavy rainfall in July and early in August. Nature, too, has during the last few days been endeavouring to administer to itself relief in the form of dust and rain storms. Yesterday afternoon we sallied forth from Jacobabad station under a rattling salute from a dust-storm. The effect, however, of these atmospheric disturbances extends over but a limited sphere, and Rindli has not been admitted into the favoured precincts. The zone of dust is considerably broader than the narrow belt of rain which follows in its wake. In Jacobabad isolated drops fell; but ten miles or so towards Sibi we crossed a narrow semi-deluged tract, where the trees and herbage were still glittering with moisture in the bright sun-blaze that succeeded the storm.

On arrival at Sibi yesterday we were joined by a very voluble Beluch or Brahui sardar, who represented that he was collecting transport for the Mission, and who, if his deeds were at all on a par with his words, had already rendered, and was still further likely to render, invaluable assistance to the Mission. He has accompanied us here, where we found that Sardar Yar Mahomed Khan, the son of the late well-known chief of the Bolan, Alluddinah, had also arrived for the purpose of meeting Colonel Ridgeway, who is expected to arrive here (by special train from Jacobabad) to-morrow about daybreak. One of the inspectors of police under the Beluchistan Agency and the Tehsildar of Sibi have also been deputed by Sir Robert Sandeman to this place, for the purpose of promoting as rapidly as possible the collection of carriage for the Mission. I hear that 1100 camels and 2500 loading-ropes are actually present here—thanks to the excellent and energetic measures adopted by the Resident in Beluchistan for the collection of the required transport. It is estimated that in all 1300 camels will be required. Amidst so much that is excellent, one drawback, however, must not be overlooked, and that is, that there are no *sulleetahs*.[1] The cavalry, it is true, have their own; but how are the hundreds of packages of private baggage, tents, mess stores, office records, stores and records of the Survey, Intelligence, Medical, and Scientific branches, to be loaded? I have not yet heard that that question has received a satisfactory answer. The arsenals of Quetta and Karachi are within call; but I imagine the Zhob expedition, and consequent movements in relief, have already taxed or will tax severely their resources.

In all there are eight members of the Mission assembled here now, and at present the Government bungalow, with the aid of partial doubling up, suffices to house us all. The accommodation for troops, however, is very limited. The 200 men of the 11th Bengal Lancers are accommodated in a *landi*, or long sort of shed, where at least they obtain shelter from the direct rays of the sun. Their horses are, of course, picketed

[1] *Sulleetah*—or, to adopt the Hunterian spelling, *salita*—is a large loading-sheet of strong coarse material, in general use with camels in all parts of Asia.

in the open air, as also are many of those belonging to the officers of the Mission. Besides a number of horses that arrived previously, and the horses and ponies that have been collected here under Sir R. Sandeman's orders for the use of the clerks, munshis, and other subordinates of the Mission, to each of whom Government has presented an outfit allowance of Rs. 500 and a steed of sorts, some 35 horses arrived this afternoon with tents and other stores of the Mission in a train under the charge of Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din Khan of the Central India Horse, and Subadar Mahomed Husain Khan of the 2d Sikhs, native *attachés* accompanying the Mission. The only other native *attaché* here is Sardar Sher Ahmed Khan, an Extra Assistant Commissioner in the Panjab, and a son of the present Governor of Kandahar. He did the Government good service at Kabul in 1879-80, and found it convenient to withdraw to India when his cousin, the present Amir, ascended the throne.

The detachment 11th Bengal Lancers will probably march to-morrow morning for Mach,—the wisest course they can pursue, considering the heat and the meagre accommodation for man and beast—accommodation that will daily grow more limited as the various component parts of the Mission congregate here. There is no difficulty about forage, for any amount of grass can be obtained in the surrounding jungle and cultivated land for the cutting. But the fact is, there is no work for the cavalry here, especially now that we expect the arrival of a detachment of infantry in a day or two. This morning early, as we were sitting together over our *chota-hazri* (early breakfast), a telegram, addressed to a mythical personage named "S. S. O., Rindli," was brought up. The senior officer present considered that under the circumstances, and in furtherance of the interests of Government, it was his duty to take upon himself the dignity and duties of that official, and opened that telegram. Accordingly it was opened, and it stated that 240 bayonets of the 20th Panjab Infantry had been directed to start from Jullunder without delay, and might be expected here in two or three days. The

receipt of this news was greeted with a general expression of satisfaction, especially on the part of the cavalry. It does indeed appear matter for congratulation that Government has deemed it advisable to rescind its previous determination. It does not seem within the bounds of possibility that a small body of cavalry could march the greater part of the day (or the best part of the night as the case may be), performing the duties of a baggage and rear guard, and when at the halt furnishing all the sentries required by a camp containing at least 1000 souls, and at the same time attend to their horses, arms, accoutrements, and saddlery, and perform all the other duties appertaining to the daily routine of a cavalry soldier. The conveyance of the infantry over the strip of waterless desert — 50 miles broad — which is situated between Nushki and the Helmund, is a matter for which due provision must be made. There seems, however, nothing to prevent their being conveyed across on camels, provided the camels are forthcoming. I am informed that the subjects of Azad Khan of Kharan (from whom camels for the Commission might be obtained) are in the habit of raiding into Seistan and other equally distant districts, mounted, not on horses, but on camels. In their case speed is no great object, for the booty they carry off consists of herds and flocks—a species of plunder that cannot be taken off at a gallop. Similarly, in the conveyance of the infantry across the desert, no undue haste is necessary. Any camel could carry a man 50 miles in fifteen hours, and consequently the infantry can be conveyed across this strip of desert in a single night. What more is needed? Every man, of course, will carry water for himself in such vessel as he possesses, and *puckali* camels will supply the rest. I hear that a number of mules are expected to arrive shortly by rail: they are doubtless intended for the carriage of ammunition, hospital panniers, and such other stores as must not be allowed to lag behind. I doubt the advisability of taking a large number of mules in a country where scarcity of fodder and water is anticipated. A camel will make an excellent meal on thorns, but a mule is particularly delicate on the subject of food and water.

It is proposed, if possible, to avoid pitching the camp here in any regular form. I am disposed to doubt the advisability of such a policy. Human nature, whether it be in the foreign, military, survey, medical, or scientific branches of the service, does not *instanter* accommodate itself to a condition of things that is either entirely foreign to it, or from which it has been estranged for some time past. For that reason I certainly think that if the camp be not regularly pitched, every man who has his tents unpacked, and pitched, and lowered, and repacked at least once before we march to Kundilani, is a sensible fellow. It was with this view that I this morning directed my butler, who speaks only Marathi or Hindustani, and three Pathans whom I engaged for camp-work, and who speak only Persian and Pushtu, to pitch my tents. I had been sitting writing quietly for fully an hour when the sound of angry voices broke on my ear. I recognised the gruff tones of the Pathans and the more treble notes of the Hindu. I went out. A very babel of tongues was going on, with which I intermingled a few comments in a style of English that is not generally classed as "the Queen's." For I ascertained that the four worthies between them had in one hour so far progressed in the art of tent-pitching as to fix in the ground four pegs, tie four ropes to them, and break an upright pole short off at the head. Having calmed the war of unknown tongues, and myself too, I explained to them that though prevention is better than cure, still when a case has exceeded the bounds of prevention, cure, and not mutual recrimination, especially in the language of Babel, is the best course to follow. So I sent them off to the bazaar for a new bamboo and an ironsmith to fit it, and instructions not to trouble me any more in the matter. I only wish I may not have any more trouble about that pole. However, whether the camp be pitched here or not, it is proposed to move to Mach as soon as possible, and pitch it there on a systematic form. At present neither the date of our departure from here, nor the date on which we are likely to march from Mach, is fixed with any degree of certainty. It is possible that more may be known when Colonel Ridgeway arrives to-

morrow; but I am disposed to think that the two words "transport" and "loading gear" contain the key to our movements—*i.e.*, until we have both in sufficiency we cannot move, and as yet we have neither. Our route from Mach, as at present proposed, is *viâ* Mastung to Nushki, and thence north of the routes followed by General Sir C. Macgregor and Captain Lockwood, straight to a point on the Helmund, some 30 or 40 miles north-east of Rudbar. However, I believe that as yet no route has been definitely decided on. The selection will be based on the reports sent in by Captain Maitland and Mr Barnes, who are out beyond Nushki collecting supplies and information.

A *tonga* (light dog-cart) has been ordered to be in readiness for Colonel Ridgeway on his arrival, and he will leave at once for Quetta. As I write at this moment (5 P.M.) another heavy dust-storm is careering along. No doors or windows can keep out the impalpable dust that it drives along. Why did not Nature decree that the rain that usually follows should precede it? 'Twere more rational surely. Captain Yate, Lieut. Talbot, and Dr Owen, have been busy unloading horses, tents, and survey stores all the afternoon. It is terribly trying work remaining out long in the sun. The coolness and shade of a dust-storm are even welcome as a protection from those murderous rays. It seems hardly credible to those who do not know Upper Sind and the Panjab frontier, that on one of these scorching days a man will welcome the advent of a dust-storm, and go out in the whirling dust that he may feel the delicious coolness of the breeze that accompanies it. Already complaints are made that some of the cases of stores are too large even to load on camels, and that such being the case, the transport will break down. I am certainly at a loss to understand how the naturalist of the party proposes to carry and utilise the contents of the numerous large cases which I see labelled as for his use. Indeed, not a few hints are being let fall that the greater part of these cases will never be opened by scientific hands, but by those of the rapacious Beluch or Pathan, whose eyes will grow round with amazement as he surveys the mysterious contents. One

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hopes that, if such be the case, those freebooters may be tempted to try a meal off arsenical paste.

1st September.

Major Hill, R.E., the head of the Survey party, and Dr Aitchison, the naturalist and botanist accompanying the Mission, arrived late last evening. After the dust-storm in the afternoon a light dropping rain commenced, and continued till late at night, and thankful indeed we were for it, since it ensured us a cool night. I would that it could also have ensured us a restful night, but that was hopeless. Shortly after midnight the 11th Bengal Lancers began to prepare for their march to Kundilani, and till 3 A.M. the roars, snorts, and grunts of the camels and the shouts of the men rendered aught but fitful snatches of slumber impossible. At last the silence of night regained its sway, and sound sleep closed our eyelids, but not for long. About 4 A.M. the sounds of steps and voices betokened the arrival of Colonel Ridgeway and his party. After that, all idea of further sleep was resigned. Colonel Ridgeway did not stay longer than was necessary to ascertain how the provision of transport was progressing, and to issue instructions for its collection, and the despatch of all stores, baggage, and followers without delay to Mach. The officers of each department will, as soon as they have received their tents and stores, and collected their establishments, move forward up the Bolan. Captain Yate has his hands full, distributing tents, and handing over stores and transport to each individual and department; and as such work can only be done in the open air, no one envies him his arduous task. Moreover, the paucity of hands available for this work is a serious source of delay. At present the services of some twenty followers of the Survey Department alone are procurable, the public followers of other branches of the Mission not having arrived yet. The burden of toil and heat rests not much less heavily on the officers of the various departments who are taking over tents and stores.

The cavalry seem to have stolen a march on the transport authorities in the dead of night, for they have walked off

with no less than 192 camels for 200 men, and such a proportion is not exactly in accordance with the familiar Kabul scale. By the by, Colonel Ridgeway on arrival found a telegram awaiting him, stating that the headquarters and 100 additional sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers were under orders to accompany the Mission; and in accordance with a suggestion made in the same telegram, the band of the regiment has been asked for.

It is estimated now that at least 300 camels are necessary to complete the transport required for the use of the Mission. Apparently the interview of Sardar Yar Mahomed Khan with Colonel Ridgeway was not attended with any satisfactory results. The voluble Beluch to whom I have alluded previously, when asked how many more camels he could supply within three days, had nothing to offer but empty long-winded phrases. A new camel contractor, by name Larinda Khan, is expected to arrive with Major Rind, and it is hoped that he, with the assistance of the Tehsildar of Sibi, will collect the required number of camels in three or four days. . Anyhow, a little competition will tend to smarten up all parties. The Survey branch hope to move on to-morrow night, and perhaps also the dispensary under Dr Owen, and the natural science department under Dr Aitchison. The last-named department alone requires 20 camels for its stores. Owing to the increase in the escort, an increase will also be made in the staff and stores of the medical branch, and all this means extra transport. Major Rind is procuring 500 *sulleetahs*, but the rest of the loading must be done with ropes alone. Each officer of the Mission is to be allowed three camels for his private baggage, but it is not certain whether that is meant to include tents or not. When I look at the piles of tents, mess-stores, *toshak-hana* (treasure) cases, survey, geological, medical, and scientific appliances lying on the railway platform, or stowed in the verandahs and rooms of the *dák* bungalow, I can only breathe a hope that it may not be necessary to cut down the proposed allowance of private transport.

Several of the native *attachés* of the Mission, of whom

there are nine in all, arrived yesterday; among others, Sardar Mahomed Aslam Khan, Commandant of the Khaibar Jazailchis; Khan Baba Khan, Extra Assistant Commissioner of the Panjab; Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, and Ressaldar-Major Mahomed Husain Khan, 7th Bengal Cavalry. Mirza Ghulam Ahmed accompanied the Seistan Commission of 1872. All these *attachés* have been provided by Government with very good tents of the Kashmir or Swiss-cottage pattern, and *pâls* are also supplied for their servants. All the English members of the Mission have been fitted out with Kashmir tents, 240 lb. in weight; while for the use of the British Commissioner and the mess on the frontier, large hill and double-poled tents and *shamianahs* have been procured. Nor has an adequate supply of mess furniture been overlooked. It was originally intended that the heavy camp and stores, which would not be required till the Mission reaches the frontier, should be sent *viâ* Kandahar and Farah under an escort furnished by the Amir. That plan has now been abandoned, and everything will travel *viâ* Nushki and Seistan. It is hoped that two of Berthon's collapsible boats will arrive from Bombay in time to be taken with the Mission. There is some difference of opinion as to the purpose for which they are really intended, but it is generally agreed that they will be useful if we get any good duck-shooting on the Helmund or Tejend, Oxus or Murghab. Should, therefore, urgent need oblige us to abandon some stores in the pathless desert, the collapsible boats must not be lightly parted with. It would be better were the scientific branch asked to sacrifice its countless reams of blotting-paper. What would the nomad do with it? Would its felt texture tempt him to make a *kibitka* of it? It would be a collapsible *kibitka* after the first fall of rain!

Colonel Ridgeway left here for Quetta by *tonga* about 7 A.M. Major Rind and Mr Merk are expected to arrive to-day or to-morrow. Captain Yate has been placed in charge of the camp until Colonel Ridgeway rejoins, and will stay here till all baggage and followers have arrived and been passed on to Mach.

3d September.

The following arrivals have taken place in the last forty-eight hours: 244 rifles of the 20th Panjab Infantry, with five native officers, under Major Meiklejohn, accompanied by Captain Cotton and Lieutenant Rawlins; Mr Merk, Personal Assistant to Colonel Ridgeway; Captain Gore, of the Survey; Major Rind, Assistant Commissary-General; and Lieutenant Burne, 23d Pioneers, in charge of transport. All the commissariat stores and a section of a field-hospital, with about 150 *kahars*,[1] have also arrived. Altogether the number of public and private followers who are to accompany the Mission has now been swelled to about 900. To house them, little groups of tents have sprung up here and there around the railway station, and an air of camp pervades the place, not, however, bearing the stamp of military precision. But at present there is no special call for rectangular regularity. Kazi Mahomed Aslam Khan and Azizullah Khan, two of the native *attachés*, have also arrived. Of the first named, the only thing worthy of note that I have heard is that, presuming on the generosity of a Government which had already supplied him with two tents, a horse, a chair, a table, and Rs. 500, he went to the officer in charge of the Mission camp and asked whether Government would not also supply him with a *charpoy*.[2] The officer referred to is an official of perhaps more than usual forbearance, but on this occasion his reply was couched in terms of more than usual expressiveness.

The career of Jemadar Azizullah Khan during the past seven or eight years is sufficiently checkered and curious to merit repetition. Lord Blandford (now Duke of Marlborough), when travelling in India, took a fancy to him, and took him with him all round the world, and finally to England. From Lord Blandford's service he passed into that of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, with whom he remained for two years. In 1878 he went to Turkey, and being appointed a lieutenant in the Sultan's army, was in Kars throughout the siege. For his services during that war he received a medal and the 5th

[1] A *kahar* is a stretcher-bearer or carrier of sick.

[2] *Charpoy* is an Indian bed.

class of the Order of the Medjidie. From Turkey he returned to India, and being appointed a jemadar in the 5th Panjab Cavalry, served with that regiment during the late Afghan war, receiving the medal with clasp for Charasia. From the 5th he went to the Panjab police, and now he is told off to accompany the Afghan Frontier Demarcation Commission, though in what capacity is not clearly defined. A strange career, but too akin to that of the rolling stone. He does not seem to have gathered much moss.

The solution of the question of transport still presents considerable difficulties, which the increase in the strength of the escort has not tended to decrease. There are 1100 camels here now, and 200 more on their way down the pass, but it is estimated that not less than 1600 are required to convey the Mission from here to Mach, and whence 300 extra camels are to be procured no one at present knows. In the meantime, the heavy camp tents were sent off last night loaded on 80 camels, and orders have been issued that every corps, department, and individual is to move to Mach as soon as possible. With this view the officer in charge of the Mission camp is issuing the light camp tents and camp furniture, and the commissariat officer distributing to followers warm clothing; and each party, whenever it is completly equipped, will get under way. News has just been received from Captain Maitland and Mr Barnes at Nushki. The former reports that, provided the Mission can collect sufficient transport to convey it to Nushki, all will be well, as he expects to be able to assemble there a number of spare camels. The present difficulty of obtaining transport is due to the Zhob expedition. A report on the road from Panjpai to Nushki has been sent in to Colonel Ridgeway, and on the 28th ultimo the above-named officers were to start from Nushki towards the Helmund, to report on the road and supplies of forage and water. When it is considered that the Mission camp will comprise not less than 1600 human souls and 600 horses and mules, and that to the best of our present knowledge a tract of desert, over 200 miles in breadth, during the last 50 miles of which water is not procurable, has to be crossed, it is obvious that such a

route should not be attempted without previous reconnaissance.

One of the most intricate *cruces* that is at present taxing the ingenuity of the transport officers of the Mission is how to convey the flag-staff to the frontier. It is a solid and weighty structure in three pieces, each about 16 feet long, so that the whole, when erected, will be about 45 feet high. It is to be hoped we shall experience no revival of the "flag question" which proved such an annoyance to Sir Fred. Goldsmid on the Seistan Boundary Commission. I must not omit to mention another important member of the Mission—viz., the Bull-dog that will keep watch at the foot of the British flag-staff. Such a guardian may be necessary, if it be true, as some suggest, that the British Lion will not be sent to support the Mission.

5th September.

The veil of difficulties and delay is lifting, and a brighter horizon looms before us. The indefatigable Tehsildar of Sibi, to whom be given all praise that is his due, brought in 124 camels this morning, and reports that 180 more camels and 60 donkeys are on the way hither. There is good reason now to hope that the night of the 8th will see the last of us out of Rindli. The Survey party and Dr Aitchison with his establishment left here on the night of the 3d, and were followed last night by three companies of the 20th Panjab Infantry, one company remaining here for guard duties. Captain Peacocke, R.E., of the Intelligence branch, and 64 sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers under Lieutenant Wright, arrived this morning. The remainder of the 11th Bengal Lancers, with Colonel Prinsep and Lieutenant Beatson, are expected here to-morrow. The 100 additional sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers now arriving will be sent back if the infantry succeed in crossing the desert. It is proposed, if possible, to despatch this evening for Quetta 600 or 700 camel-loads of mess and commissariat stores. By the by, a telegram was received yesterday from Colonel Ridgeway directing that the camp be formed at Quetta, and not at Mach. The fact is, that the Bombay commissariat

depot at Quetta had only thrown one day's supplies for the estimated strength of the Mission into each station in the Bolan Pass, and consequently the detention of any portion of the Mission, far less the whole, at Mach for more than one day became impossible. The success of the Tehsildar of Sibi in obtaining this extra transport is most opportune. Owing to the Zhob expedition, every available animal, from a camel to a donkey, in or around Quetta, has been bought or hired, consequently it is not surprising that Colonel Ridgeway yesterday telegraphed that he could send no more transport from Quetta, and that the Mission must do the best it could with the 1300 camels already provided for it. Such being the case, the course that was yesterday evening deemed the only one feasible was to leave here all such mess and commissariat stores as would not be required till the frontier was reached, to be conveyed *viâ* Kandahar to Herat by Khorasan carriers. This last addition, however, has, it is hoped, smoothed away all hindrances. If only the Mission can reach Quetta, sufficient transport can be in the meantime collected there for the onward journey. Of the camels now at the disposal of the Mission, a large number belong to a Brahui contractor, named Ata Mahomed, whose deeds will bear no comparison with his words. His camels ply only between here and Quetta. Sardar Yar Mahomed Khan came down here with him ostensibly to assist the Mission; but so far as his fulfilment of that duty is concerned, he might as well have stayed in his native wilds. He is quite ready to sell anybody a Beluch mare at an exorbitant price, and it is possibly with that object in view that he squats for hours daily in the verandah of the *dâk* bungalow, surrounded by ringleted and perfumed (in sooth, too highly perfumed) retainers. Most of us here are much too busy to have any spare time to devote to small-talk with him, even if he possessed any interesting qualities or powers of conversation. Strong enough hints, indeed, he receives that his room would be more welcome than his company, but they fall unheeded on the innately dull or wilfully dense tympanum of his mind. However, Ata Mahomed is his subject, and Ata Mahomed's

500 camels are essential now to Government, and so the little foibles of both him and his master must be viewed with an indulgent eye. The other camel contractor here is one Abdullah Khan Nasiri, of the Povindah tribe, who has been settled at Quetta for some years. His 900 camels are to go all the way with us to the frontier, and his pet little game is to load two maunds on a camel that ought to carry five. However, he was caught red-handed, and successfully thwarted by the vigilance of the officer superintending the despatch of the heavy camp equipage, and he will probably try some new artifice with the next batch that he sends off. I hear that Government has contracted to pay Rs. 35 monthly for each of these camels.

It is much to be regretted that the *pie* dogs of this neighbourhood cannot be impressed and utilised as transport. At present they lurk by the wayside and waylay the unwary footsteps of the horseman, or pounce out from behind on any strange dog that passes by. Such unprovoked assaults necessarily incite the owner to assist and defend his canine follower. A native of the Low Countries would promptly harness these vicious and cowardly brutes to a little cart, and make each drag his maund or so. These dogs are but one of the many evils of Rindli. As a token of the heat, I may mention that the thermometer now (3 P.M.) stands at 102½° in my room. Imagine what it is to be out all day in the sun! As for the flies, they worry from morn to night. They rouse you from your well-earned rest at daybreak, and they leave you in peace only when the shades of night are falling. And when their innings is over, the sand-flies go in at you; and happy is he who, between sand-flies, the loading of camels, and the whistling and shunting on the railway, has enjoyed one night's perfect rest here. Can you wonder that the prospect of a speedy departure is welcomed by all?

The real work of the Survey, Scientific, and Intelligence branches will scarcely begin till we are beyond Nushki. When the Russo-Afghan frontier is reached, the Survey Department will be specially occupied in surveying the boundary as fixed, or proposed to be fixed, by the British and

Russian Commissioners. In addition, however, to that, the special duty of the Survey Department, all the country that is traversed by the Mission will be surveyed with as much accuracy as time and circumstances will permit. Dr Owen is to prepare and submit to Government a report on the ethnography, arts, manufactures, trades, and agriculture of the peoples and tribes through whose territory we pass—(he has with him a young native artist from the Jaipur School of Art)—illustrating it with photographs and sketches representing the dress and types of the inhabitants, and the most interesting views and sites. This, of course, will be in addition to his dispensary work, which will prove an arduous though interesting duty. Of the prospective sphere of work of the natural history and botanical department, it is Dr Aitchison's intention to extend his researches and studies to every branch of the science which he represents, and to collect specimens of all kinds, be it fish, flesh, fowl, or creeping thing. In addition to the shooters who accompany him, there is little doubt that the sporting members of the Mission—and that term probably includes all, or almost all—will afford him assistance in collecting specimens; and possibly some of the younger associates of the Mission will not be sorry to revive a pastime that is a passion with most British schoolboys, and volunteer to assist our ornithologist in collecting birds' eggs and nests. Unfortunately, he, steeled by his enthusiasm in the interests of pure science, spoke ruthlessly of the necessity for his purpose of shooting the sitting bird. Now I would not mind scrambling up a tree, if not too high, after a bird's nest, but I really could not shoot in cold blood the bird that sat thereon. Alas that such weakness should be engendered by want of scientific ardour!

6th September.

Captain Griesbach, the geologist accompanying the Mission, arrived last night, and starts for Quetta this evening with Mr Merk and myself. Colonel Prinsep and Lieutenant Beatson, with some 40 sabres of the 11th Bengal Cavalry, arrived this morning, and will probably leave for Quetta to-morrow evening, to be followed by Major Rind, Captain Yate, and Dr

Owen, and the last of the Mission camp on the 8th. Captain de Laessoe is expected here on the 8th. It is good news to hear that there are no less than three photographic apparatuses with the Mission, in charge, respectively, of Dr Owen, Captain Gore, and Captain Griesbach. The results of their labours will, it is to be hoped, familiarise the general public with scenes from countries that have been rarely traversed before by British footsteps, and never by a photographer. Now that all difficulties about transport have disappeared, the next question of interest is the route from Quetta to the Helmund.

QUETTA, *12th September.*

I left Rindli with Mr Merk and Captain Griesbach at midnight on the 6th instant. The last string of camels filed out of the Rindli railway storeyard on the morning of the 9th, and during the afternoon of the same day Major Rind and Captain Yate received a telegram from Colonel Ridgeway, requesting them to join him at Quetta with the least possible delay, as he wished to go on to Nushki, and could not do so until their arrival. They accordingly started at 5 P.M. in a *tonga* that some happy coincidence placed at their disposal, drove to Kirta (18 miles), and thence rode, using the horses of the Beluch levies, to Sir-i-Ab (60 miles). There or thereabouts they overtook on the road a *tonga* returning empty to Quetta, and quitting with a sigh of relief the hard and merciless pigskin, completed the remaining six or seven miles on wheels. I may mention, as an instance of the marching power of camels, that Captain Yate's kit, which left Rindli at 5 P.M. on the 9th, arrived here early this morning, thus performing a journey of 85 miles in about two and a half days in three marches, respectively 32, 29, and 24 miles in length. Such rapidity of marching is almost equally trying to horses and servants, and is entirely to be attributed to the energy and endurance of the small escort of the 11th Bengal Lancers that accompanied the party. Too much praise cannot be bestowed on all ranks of that corps for the cheery heartiness with which they applied themselves to every task that was required of them. For some days at Rindli no other hands were available

for fatigue-duty, and all day long in the sun-glare they toiled, not only without a murmur or symptom of fatigue, but with a readiness that must have done much to lighten the labour of the officer who had to superintend the sorting and distribution of the tents and stores. There are times when an unwilling horse would break a man's heart, and this was one of them.

The Bolan Pass, with its heat and flies, dust-storms and sand-flies, stony plains and rocky ridges, is too well known to need description, and yet the Intelligence Department of all others called on the military authorities here for a report on it only the other day. If, however, its natural features may be dismissed without comment, I think that one or two of its artificial conditions merit attention—not for their excellence, but for the very reverse. It should be remembered that the Quetta garrison is a large one, and, moreover, there are some thirty ladies in Quetta. Consequently British officers and their wives and families must be continually travelling up and down the Pass. How is it, then, that the bungalows are all more or less dirty and uncared for — more especially that at Bibinani; that at some stages there is no *khansamah*, or he is found to be absent; that there are no servants; and that the food provided by the *khansamah* would, by its sight and odour alone, blunt the edge of the keenest appetite? That supplies are dear is not surprising, for the Bolan Pass is a barren waste. The want of cleanliness of the public bungalows was thrown into strong relief by the neat and cleanly condition of the bungalows reserved for the sole use of the executive engineer. It is a poor argument to plead that no fee is charged for the use of the bungalows, and that the executive engineer—poor fellow—is doomed to live always in the Pass. Why not provide cleanly bungalows and a staff of servants, and charge for them? As for the second argument, one might as well say that the engineer would in time grow callous to dirt, whereas it gives a shock to the untrained feelings of the casual traveller. As for the rations supplied by the commissariat for the use of the officers of the Afghan Boundary Commission—I speak from my own expe-

rience—they were such as would probably never be issued to, and certainly not accepted by, the British soldier. I admit that the meat and potatoes could not be expected to be good; but tea, sugar, rice, and salt can be provided, and preserved good and pure in the Bolan as well as anywhere else. In time of war some allowance may be made for the occasional inferior quality of rations, but in time of peace there is no excuse. The filthiness of the sugar supplied at some of the stations defies description. The *bhoosa* issued for our horses was such that the horses refused to touch it. However, the memory of how we were housed and fed in the Bolan is unpleasant, and I gladly pass on to a more attractive theme.

On arrival at Sir-i-Ab on the morning of the 10th instant, I found that the camp was just being pitched on the plan which is intended to be followed throughout the march—viz., briefly, the 11th Bengal Lancers in front, the 20th Panjab Infantry in rear, and the Foreign Office, Survey, Intelligence, and scientific members of the Mission, with their servants and horses, in the centre. The position of the transport was not defined. I there heard that both Major Hill, R.E., and Lieutenant Burne, of the 23d Pioneers, had been pronounced by the medical authorities unfit in point of health to be sent on an expedition which will undoubtedly be arduous and trying to any constitution. It was also reported that the infantry of the escort would be conveyed across the desert to the Helmund at all costs and hazards; and that the detachment of the 11th Bengal Lancers, under Colonel Prinsep, which left Rindli on the 7th instant, would return to Umballa. However, up to the present moment no decision has been arrived at on this point, and it is the cordial wish and hope of every member of the Mission that no fraction of the 11th Bengal Lancers may be subjected to the mortification of returning to India from Nushki or anywhere else. It is true that sentiment cannot be allowed to enter into the motives that influence a Government (although many a Government has had to yield to sentiment), but in this case there is more than mere sentiment. Whatever members of Government seated in Simla may think, every one is agreed that 300 sabres and 250 bayonets are not

a man too many for the duties to be performed. The possibility of an attack on the Mission by the inhabitants of the country through which it will pass is an accident on which the estimate of the required escort cannot be based. The Mission is one of peace, and its character should be sacred (one is doubtful what tenets the marauding Biluch and Turkoman and the wily Afghan hold about the sanctity of missions), and it appears that the Amir has guaranteed its safety anywhere in his territories except in the neighbourhood of Zamindawar. The escort as at present constituted could repel any ordinary attack, and to believe so is no small consolation when about to poke one's nose into what is almost *terra incognita*, although such is not its supposed object.

After a short halt at Sir-i-Ab I rode on here with Mr Merk, Captain Griesbach remaining at Sir-i-Ab. With the exception of Colonel Ridgeway, whose sphere of work obliges him to be in Quetta, every one was at Sir-i-Ab. Since then Major Rind and Captains Durand and Yate have arrived here. Captain de Laessoe and Dr Owen are marching up, and are as it were the rear-guard of the Mission. They and all the baggage should arrive at Sir-i-Ab on or before the 14th instant, and after that there appears to be nothing to delay the departure of the Mission for Nushki—an event for which, I hear, Sir Oriel Tanner and every one else fervently prays. The fact is, between this Mission and the Zhob expedition, there is not a pack-animal to be got in the place. I wanted to send some potatoes, which in Quetta grow to perfection, to a friend of mine: I could not even raise a donkey to carry them. Such, indeed, has been the zeal of the transport caterers for the Mission, that even Government transport urgently required for other purposes narrowly escaped being impressed. The carts of the Government contractor here were only released in obedience to a telegraphic order from the General; and even an officer hurrying up to join the Zhob expedition had difficulty in defending his camels from the ready grasp of the Mission emissaries. The transport that is now available to accompany the Mission on its onward march to Herat consists of 1300 camels and 100 mules, and there is no intention

of taking more. If that is not enough, then the amount of stores and baggage will be lessened. At present it is proposed to send commissariat supplies for the whole force for one year, except of flour, of which only a five days' reserve is being carried. For my part, I cannot see the necessity for so doing. Are the bazaars of Meshed and Herat, the fertile Herat, supposed to be empty? At Rome do as the Romans do. Does the Hindu expect to get everywhere the *masalas* and spices of his native land? When he goes abroad, let him eat the food of the country in which he finds himself. The Afghan and Persian know very well how to live. Indeed, if you told the latter that the art of gastronomy was practised to greater perfection in India than in his native land, he would indignantly argue the point with you. Furthermore, the greater part of the escort are Afghans, who will naturally find in their own country the very food they like best.

When the arduous nature of the march that lies before the Commission, and the trying changes of climate and temperature to which they will be exposed, are taken into due consideration, it must be admitted that the medical authorities are very right in refusing to send any man who is not in a sound state of health. There will be sickness enough, without starting burdened by sick. Already the sudden migration from 105° in the shade at Rindli to 60° at night at Darwaza, has bowled over men of all ranks, castes, and callings, right and left, with fever. It has spared neither master nor servant. However, a little touch of fever is soon put right. By the by, I hear there is a rumour abroad that this Commission is fitted out with unprecedented splendour and luxury; indeed I have seen some allusions to that effect in the press. The sooner that idea is abandoned the better. In providing for officers, the escort, and the followers of the Mission, a judicious effort has been made by Government to mitigate the hardships and alleviate the discomforts to which all alike will be exposed. It ill becomes the resident in India, who in the heat can avail himself of the punkah, the tatty, and the thermantidote, and in the cold weather can draw his easy-chair to the fireside with closed doors and windows, and retire

marily removed from the trackless desert to the happy hunting-grounds. The difficulties before us, in fact, pale before those encountered by the Russians in their various endeavours to reach Khiva; and to suppose for a moment that this Commission is exposed to the risk of incurring the disasters which befell them is simply unreasonable. Up to the present time, however, no very clear and satisfactory information about the various routes has been received from Captain Maitland, Mr Barnes, C.S., and Rai Bahadur Hitu Ram, C.I.E., who are now engaged in exploring routes and collecting supplies. Captain Maitland has been as far as Arbu, and reported that route so far practicable. He is now, I hear, returning to Nushki, but his report on the route beyond Arbu is not yet known. The Kuh-i-Arbu (Arbu Peak) is a solitary conical eminence rising out of the level desert plain; a spring of good water bubbles out at its foot. The route *viâ* Chagai has not yet been reported on, but is generally considered by the authorities here to be the best. The Arbu route terminates at Bagat, and the Chagai route at Khwaja Ali on the Helmund. It is well known that a belt of desert, some fifty miles in breadth, forms the southern border of the Helmund, and that belt must be crossed whatever route is followed. From Nushki as far as the edge of that belt of desert, water is, as a rule, procurable either from springs, tanks, or wells, at distances within the compass of a day's march. The quantity of water in the tanks and wells, however, is variable, and for that reason it is essential to ascertain beforehand what amount of water will be available. If there is an abundance, then the Mission may march *en masse*, or perhaps in two or three divisions, at a day's interval between each. Should it prove, however, that in some of these wells the supply of water is scant, and that the water filters into them very slowly, then it will be necessary either to divide the Mission into a number of small parties marching at a day's interval from each other, and perhaps also along different routes, or to carry an adequate supply of water from stage to stage. By sending on an officer with a small party two or three days ahead of the main body, the actual state of the

to rest in a warm room, to cavil at the luxury of a body of men who in a few weeks will be struggling across the desert of the Garm-sir under a broiling sun, and a few weeks later will be shivering under half-a-dozen blankets and a *poshtin*, while the wind finds ingress at every corner of his tent. I never yet knew a place styled "Garm-sir" (hot region) without a very good cause—to wit, the Garm-sir between the shore of the Persian Gulf and the mountains of Fars; and it is generally reported that on the steppes of Turkistan the thermometer goes considerably below zero at night, and snow often lies thick on the ground.

13th September.

Colonel Ridgeway and Mr Merk started at 2 A.M. this morning for Kanak *en route* to Nushki. At Kanak (32 miles from here) they will overtake Captain Gore and Lieutenant the Honourable M. G. Talbot, R.E., with the Survey party, and Captain Peacocke, R.E., of the Intelligence branch, and the whole party should reach Nushki (89 miles from here) on the 17th. There their duties of obtaining all possible information about the routes from Nushki to the Helmund, and of collecting supplies along the route or routes (for it is not unlikely that the Mission will be formed into two divisions and move on parallel routes) selected, and facilitating the conveyance of water with the Mission for use at halting-places where water is not procurable, will commence. If proper measures are taken for providing the means of carrying water with the party —*i.e.*, if every man is supplied with a small *mussuk*,[1] which he will fill, and either carry himself, or, if he gets the chance, attach to a camel-load—and if water is carried either in camel or mule *puckals*,[1] or, as is the custom in the 11th Bengal Lancers, under the bellies of the horses themselves, then it may reasonably be expected that the occasional want of water at places will be the cause of little difficulty or inconvenience. It may be that now and again the Commission may be lawfully entitled to prefer a claim to the designation of "The Great Unwashed," but it will not be likely to be sum-

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marily removed from the trackless desert to the happy hunting-grounds. The difficulties before us, in fact, pale before those encountered by the Russians in their various endeavours to reach Khiva; and to suppose for a moment that this Commission is exposed to the risk of incurring the disasters which befell them is simply unreasonable. Up to the present time, however, no very clear and satisfactory information about the various routes has been received from Captain Maitland, Mr Barnes, C.S., and Rai Bahadur Hitu Ram, C.I.E., who are now engaged in exploring routes and collecting supplies. Captain Maitland has been as far as Arbu, and reported that route so far practicable. He is now, I hear, returning to Nushki, but his report on the route beyond Arbu is not yet known. The Kuh-i-Arbu (Arbu Peak) is a solitary conical eminence rising out of the level desert plain; a spring of good water bubbles out at its foot. The route *viâ* Chagai has not yet been reported on, but is generally considered by the authorities here to be the best. The Arbu route terminates at Bagat, and the Chagai route at Khwaja Ali on the Helmund. It is well known that a belt of desert, some fifty miles in breadth, forms the southern border of the Helmund, and that belt must be crossed whatever route is followed. From Nushki as far as the edge of that belt of desert, water is, as a rule, procurable either from springs, tanks, or wells, at distances within the compass of a day's march. The quantity of water in the tanks and wells, however, is variable, and for that reason it is essential to ascertain beforehand what amount of water will be available. If there is an abundance, then the Mission may march *en masse*, or perhaps in two or three divisions, at a day's interval between each. Should it prove, however, that in some of these wells the supply of water is scant, and that the water filters into them very slowly, then it will be necessary either to divide the Mission into a number of small parties marching at a day's interval from each other, and perhaps also along different routes, or to carry an adequate supply of water from stage to stage. By sending on an officer with a small party two or three days ahead of the main body, the actual state of the

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13th September.

Colonel Ridgeway and Mr Merk started at 2 A.M. this morning for Kanak *en route* to Nushki. At Kanak (32 miles from here) they will overtake Captain Gore and Lieutenant the Honourable M. G. Talbot, R.E., with the Survey party, and Captain Peacocke, R.E., of the Intelligence branch, and the whole party should reach Nushki (89 miles from here) on the 17th. There their duties of obtaining all possible information about the routes from Nushki to the Helmund, and of collecting supplies along the route or routes (for it is not unlikely that the Mission will be formed into two divisions and move on parallel routes) selected, and facilitating the conveyance of water with the Mission for use at halting-places where water is not procurable, will commence. If proper measures are taken for providing the means of carrying water with the party —*i.e.*, if every man is supplied with a small *mussuk*,[1] which he will fill, and either carry himself, or, if he gets the chance, attach to a camel-load—and if water is carried either in camel or mule *puckals*,[1] or, as is the custom in the 11th Bengal Lancers, under the bellies of the horses themselves, then it may reasonably be expected that the occasional want of water at places will be the cause of little difficulty or inconvenience. It may be that now and again the Commission may be lawfully entitled to prefer a claim to the designation of "The Great Unwashed," but it will not be likely to be sum-

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wells at the time can be ascertained and reported, and measures should be taken accordingly. In short, it is evident that if proper precautions are taken, and suitable arrangements made, the march of the Mission to the Helmund is perfectly feasible. The roads—mere tracks, or the suspicion of a track, in the desert—in themselves present no difficulties, except that the provision of competent guides is an imperative necessity. The camels, of course, pick up their own living. There then remains the provision of firewood for cooking of fodder for the horses and mules, and rations for the men — a duty that has been allotted to Mr H. S. Barnes, C.S.

14th September.

My telegram on the 6th, that "all difficulties about transport had disappeared," was, I regret to say, premature. I cried before the Mission was out of the wood. I reckoned without the camel contractor, who on this occasion has proved but a sorry host. His camels or camel-men with camels have been bolting freely in the Bolan; even some of the loads have disappeared. Moreover, he has not nearly enough of drivers in proportion to the number of camels. However, it is more than probable that he will be made to smart severely for his failure to fulfil his contract. The torrent of rupees, of the flow of which from Government coffers into his pocket he has probably been dreaming much of late, will, I trust, be considerably abated by the infliction of a heavy fine. But for the non-arrival of these stores, which cannot now reach Sir-i-Ab before the 17th, all is ready for a start. As it is, the 18th appears to be the first possible date of departure. Dr Owen reached Sir-i-Ab this morning alone, Captain de Laessoe having gone off at Darwaza *viâ* Mastung to meet Colonel Ridgeway at Nushki. Rai Bahadur Hitu Ram, C.I.E., has reported a scarcity of water beyond Chagai; that in a large tank where a fortnight ago there was a foot of water, there is now but six inches, and that, too, is rapidly evaporating; and in some wells there is not more than two feet of water. This is a statement,

however, that has not yet been confirmed by good authority. If it be true a portion of the escort must go back, although the present intention is that the whole of it—*i.e.*, 300 sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers and 240 bayonets of the 20th Panjab Infantry, under command of Colonel Prinsep — should accompany the Mission. An order from the Government of India has been circulated throughout the camp cautioning every one to avoid any cause of friction with the inhabitants of the countries through which the Commission will pass. It is also directed that the operations of the Survey, Intelligence, and scientific branches must be suspended until the frontier is reached, except in the immediate vicinity of the route and camp, and then only when unattended by any risk. Villages and towns are to be avoided, and the camp is always to be pitched in a defensible position. When the Amir's escort joins us, communication with the inhabitants is to be carried on through its commander, and in the event of any difficulty arising, his intervention is to be called for. Only in the event of absolute necessity for defensive measures is the British escort to take any action. The command of the whole Mission, until the junction with Sir Peter Lumsden, is vested in Colonel Ridgeway.

Before I leave Quetta for an indefinite period, I wish to mention the courtesy of the Quetta Club in making the entire Mission honorary members. That act of kindness on their part has been a real boon to us all—both those scattered about the Quetta cantonment and those who ride in from Sir-i-Ab to spend the day or a few hours. For my part, I find Quetta charming, at least for a passing visit. The climate is cool and bracing; delicious fruits and vegetables, and good meat, and the best bread ever tasted, may be of the number of those carnal delights for which we should, as taught in our Catechism, profess the most profound indifference—but still, for the benefit of the outer world, I will just remark that they can be obtained in Quetta. Then a *turf* polo and cricket ground, and race-course—in how many more stations in India do you see that? And yet among the residents I hear but one unanimous cry, and that condemnatory; and not without

reason, seemingly. What is the place, after all, but a dry brown plain shut in by sterile grey mountains, a barrier beyond which no one goes? They tell me that, after a time, this confined position assumes to the resident the air of a prison, beyond whose walls the wide world with its beauties and joys is known to lie, but escape is impossible. This sense of isolation brings in its train weariness and depression. Of the unhealthiness of Quetta there can be little doubt.[1] I hear that the North Staffordshire Regiment has 180 men in hospital. No wonder the residents here feel it an injustice to themselves that the press are eternally lauding the salubrity of the climate. As for the sanguine contributor to the 'Pall Mall Gazette,' who has already in his mind's eye turned Quetta into a great manufacturing and agricultural centre, he is universally ridiculed. He may be right for all I know. His brewery is already about to be started. The soil seems fertile, and the supply of water, whether for the mill-wheel or the ploughed field, is plentiful. The population is increasing, and will go on increasing if the present large cantonment here is maintained. But does Government mean to maintain it? When one looks at the meagre accommodation here for officers, —why, there are some married men here living in the veriest dovecots!—we must trust 'tis the honeymoon,—and hears the reports of the discomforts and sufferings of troops, followers, and horses in the cold weather, one can only suppose that, owing to uncertainty of plans, a just and humane Government is unable at present to authorise the construction of better and more extensive lines.

[1] Since the above remarks were written, the hot weather and autumn of 1885 have demonstrated more clearly than ever that Quetta is a station fatal to the general health of its residents. Sir Charles Macgregor in September, and Sir Donald Stewart in November 1885, both visited it. I was somewhat surprised to find that the former was not convinced of its unhealthiness. If I remember rightly, the 1st Battalion Oxfordshire Light Infantry lost 70 or 80 men, and the 14th Bombay Native Infantry about 60, during the summer and autumn of 1885. Cholera raged on the Bolan and Hurnai routes. We have at least one good reason for being thankful that war with Russia did not break out in the spring of 1885, and that is the knowledge that our troops, so few and so precious as they are, would have been decimated by cholera, choleraic diarrhœa, dysentery, and other diseases, before they ever reached Kandahar.

[illegible], 19th September.

On the afternoon of the 15th I received orders to proceed to Nushki without delay. Personally I was ready to move at a few hours' notice, but personal mobility was in my case liable to modification by external influences—viz. transport and escort. Both, I was informed, would be present at my tent on the evening of the 16th. The camels arrived about 10 P.M., but the escort roused me from my dreams at 5 A.M. on the 17th to inform me that they had arrived, but without transport. There is nothing more annoying than to be delayed when ready. I got up sharp and went off in quest of camels, and luckily secured the number I wanted before they had all gone out to graze. I then had leisure to inspect my own transport, and four more miserable animals I have rarely set eyes on—young, under-sized, and weak. Clearly Abdullah Khan Nasiri, the contractor, had been weeding out his stud. I had no choice but to utilise these camels for the first stage of 16 miles to Girdi-Talab; but when, on arrival there, I found ample supplies for man and beast, and ascertained that a similar amount of supplies had been laid in under Sir R. Sandeman's orders at every stage between Quetta and Nushki, I at once decided to hand over three camel-loads of fodder, which I had brought with me for the horses of the escort, to the *gomashta* in charge, and in future to indent at each camp for the fodder I required. I was thus enabled to afford myself the satisfaction of returning at once to the contractor the three worst camels he had sent me.

A minute description of my route is unnecessary. Every one knows South Afghanistan and its valleys, mountains, torrent-beds and mountain-passes, and flies. I cannot let the flies pass unnoticed. The sun may scorch by day, and the cold may bite by night, and between the two that obtrusive organ the nose has "a real bad time of it," as a Yankee would say; but would that the sun glowed fiercer, and the chill air blew keener, were there but no flies in South Afghanistan. On the march, they ride in hundreds on the traveller's hat, coat, and trousers, and martyrise the tip of his nose and the lobes of his ears. Does one take a meal? they buzz ravenously over his face, hands,

and food, and in their reckless greed meet a sudden death in a cup of boiling-hot tea. Does one take up the pen? they gluttonously imbibe the ink ere it dries on the paper, thus robbing the blotting-paper of its honourable functions. They are ubiquitous; escape is hopeless. On horseback, beneath a tree, inside a tent,—wherever man is, there is the fly in myriads. Do you think you escape them at night? Not so! As you smoke the pipe of rest after dinner,—the pipe that should be so enjoyable after a good day's work,—they come dropping from the roof of the tent, where they have taken shelter from the chill night air, on to your head, causing incessant irritation, till at last, exasperated and worried beyond endurance, you throw aside pipe and book, "douse the glim," and seek in darkness the peace and rest that are denied you in the light. The Holy Scripture has portrayed the devil as a roaring lion: I believe that there is more innate devilry in one fly than in all the other members of creation combined. No one who has not marched and lived in tents in oriental climes can possibly realise the horrors of the Egyptian plague of flies; and yet, irritating as is the torment of flies here, it fades into insignificance in comparison with what the wayfarer endures in a Persian *chapparkhana* (post-house). Probably the fly, as a communicator of disease and impurity, is unequalled. An insect that clusters over a foul sore, that swarms around the sick and dying, that delights to hover around and settle on all that is foul, impure, and uncleanly—that is the insect that defiles our food, persons, and property with its polluting touch. Have the researches of science discovered in the fly any good qualities to counterbalance the evil ones?

Girdi-Talab, as its name implies, is the site of a tank; in fact it is nothing but a tank, and a very small one, though big enough to water many animals. To go to it from Quetta, the traveller passes round the north spur of the Chiltan range, and then shapes his course west by south, and continues to follow that direction, with some slight deviations, all the way to Nushki. From Girdi-Talab to Kanak is a distance of some 18 or 19 miles; 12 miles from Girdi-Talab the valley widens, and is studded as far as Kanak with vil-

lages, seamed with irrigation channels, and dotted with fields of maize, carrots, tobacco, water-melons, and lucerne grass. Wheat, barley, *bajri*, and other grains are grown here as *rabi* (spring) crops. Amid so many villages, we, being without a guide, had great difficulty in finding Kanak. The inhabitants evinced a general disposition to afford as little assistance as possible to the British intruder; and even had their feelings been more friendly, linguistic difficulties stood in the way. It is well known that the Pushtu of the west differs very widely from that spoken around Kabul, so much so that the Afghan of the Khaibar barely understands the Pathan of the Peshin. Consequently the sowars of my escort, hailing from the highlands between Peshawar and Kabul, could neither understand nor make themselves understood by the denizens of this district, and any communications between them resulted in a minimum of information acquired, and a maximum of imprecations from the lips of the sowars. However, the steady repetition of the word "Kanak" was ultimately crowned with success, and beneath the grateful shade of a mulberry-tree we awaited the arrival of our camels. The village of Kanak lies to the north of a mound crowned by what may be the remains of a fort. From the western slope of that mound issues a clear cool spring of delicious water. It is rare to meet with such a spring in South Afghanistan, where almost all the water has either some unpleasant flavour or some pernicious quality; and here man must step in to nullify the beneficent work of Nature. In the evening I strolled up to the fountain-head, and was watching with pleasure the pure sparkling current as it flowed from the soil, when four or five women of the village approached, and casting a number of dirty *mussuks* (water-skins) into the water at the very fountain-head, stepped in after them, and proceeded to cleanse both themselves and the *mussuks*. I turned away in disgust, and returning to camp, emptied my *chhagul* (leather water-bottle) and sent a servant off to refill it, instructing him to take care that no Pathan ladies were bathing higher up the stream.

From Kanak to Panjpai is a march of some 15 miles through a country almost entirely barren. Half-way the

road crosses a stiffish pass, which, however, could be made passable for wheeled carriage in one or two days by a regiment of pioneers and a company of sappers. Throughout this country there is a marked scarcity of food and fuel. The natives themselves largely use wormwood-scrub; but its strong pungent perfume must be very objectionable when burning, and apt almost to taint the food. On the hills and higher slopes of the mountains, and on the borders of torrent-beds, dwarf trees and bushes grow, and these constitute the only material for fuel which this country is capable of producing. The few apricot, mulberry, and willow trees that grow around the villages and on the banks of the water-channels are too precious, on account of the fruit and the shade from the sun's burning rays that they afford, to be ever made the victims of the woodman's axe. The rations laid in from Quetta to Nushki for the use of the Mission consist of wheat and barley-straw (*bhoosa*), barley, *ghee* (clarified butter), coarse flour, *dhall* (a kind of small pea to which natives of India are very partial), and salt, and of these only the straw and barley are procurable locally. Lucerne grass is grown in large quantities in this neighbourhood. One of the few products of these parts, and one that might well be dispensed with, is a small species of leech which swarms in any water that is not fairly flowing. I removed three from the mouth of one of my horses to-day. The sight of blood on his lips after a long hot march rather alarmed me. I feared some internal rupture, and was consequently relieved to find that it was nothing worse than a few leeches.

KHAISAR, 21*st September*.

The march yesterday from Panjpai to Singbur-Chaman was an easy one of about ten miles, albeit most uninteresting, for the country we traversed was as unproductive as the Libyan desert. Singbur-Chaman is a curious spot—in fact a tiny oasis. Not that it is inhabited, nor indeed did I see any trace of an owner. It is merely a large meadow lying among the barren hills. Water is very near the surface—so near, indeed, that it trickles out in two places, but in such minute quanti-

ties as to be quite inadequate to meet the wants of a large force. The main water-supply consists in two pits, dug specially for the use of the Mission, some ten feet deep and three or four feet in diameter, each containing from one to two feet of water. The grass which entitles this spot to be termed a meadow is of a tough spiny character, such as I have never before noticed; a dog runs over it like a bear on hot irons, and yet horses eat it readily. Singbur proved a most pleasant camping-ground. A cool west wind blew freshly down the valley, and the green grass seemed to take all the sting out of the rays of a sun that hereabouts is usually reflected from burning sand or soil. The distance from Singbur to Khaisar is 25 miles, and a very wearisome march it is, over hill and dale and stone-strewn torrent-beds, and shut in by bleak hills, dotted here and there with a stunted tree that tends only to bring out the general barrenness in stronger relief; for it reminds one of a fact that one might otherwise forget here—viz., that verdure is a reality and not a dream. The distance from Panjpai to Khaisar is therefore about 35 miles, and the necessity of a watering-station between these two places has doubtless been the origin of Singbur-Chaman. Khaisar also is a name and a watering-place, but not a habitation. Khaisar, as I was informed by a Beluch sowar, is the Beluchi word for tamarisk. The river is termed Khaisar Lora, because its bed (as far as the eye could see) is a dense mass of tamarisk. When it was finally decided that the Mission should take the Nushki-Rudbar route, Sir R. Sandeman was called upon to collect supplies at suitable stages, and institute a postal service between Quetta and Nushki. The postal service is, of course, carried out by the "local levies,"[1] and seems to act satisfactorily. In selecting the places both for the collection of supplies and the relays of postal sowars, Sir R. Sandeman had, of course, to be guided mainly by the water-supply. Singbur-Chaman and Khaisar are cases of Hobson's choice, there being.

[1] The "local levies" are a body of horsemen kept up by the petty chiefs in the Beluchistan agency for the service of the Indian Government. They have replaced that distinguished corps erst known as the "Beluch Guides," or "Catch-'em-alive-oh's."

water nowhere else. It is with a sense of thankfulness that I now look upon the march from the former to the latter as for me a thing of the past, and I feel sympathy and pity for the force of 1100 men for whom it is still a task of the future. Before leaving Quetta, I was informed that the distance was 17 miles. Luckily for me, some of Colonel Ridgeway's servants arrived at Singbur yesterday from Nushki, and from them I learned the real distance to be 25 miles. I accordingly altered my plans, and started off all the tents and baggage at 10.30 P.M., following myself at 4 o'clock this morning. The camels arrived at 11 A.M., and I at 12.15 P.M.

Azad Khan of Kharan came into Nushki a week ago and visited Colonel Ridgeway, and through his (Azad Khan's) instrumentality and the exertions of Mr Barnes, the political officer, some 300 riding and 100 *puckali*—*i.e.*, for carrying water—camels have been assembled at Nushki for the conveyance of the infantry, followers, and water across the desert. Some 120 *bhistis'* (water-carriers') *mussuks* and fifty leather buckets for drawing water have also been provided. The chief reason, however, for Azad Khan's visit to Nushki was to explain the action taken by his eldest son, Sardar Nauroz Khan, relative to some Mingal Brahuis who, having murdered some natives in the Bolan, had taken refuge with Nauroz Khan. The chief of the Mingals, when the crime was traced to his tribesmen, went down to Kharan to seize them. Sardar Nauroz Khan, through some misunderstanding, declined at first to give up the murderers, but ultimately, when matters were explained to him, handed them over. From this trivial occurrence sprang a rumour, current in Quetta ten days ago, that Nauroz Khan had collected 300 men and rebelled against his father's authority. It was even said that he proposed to worry the Mission on its march to the Helmund. So much for the truth of bazaar *gup*. Although one must fain admit that the inability of the Amir to escort the Mission in safety *viâ* Kandahar to the Russo-Afghan frontier is rather galling to the pride of a nation that subsidises him, and avowedly regards him as a dependant, still the energy and promptitude he has shown in despatching officials to stock the road from

Khwaja Ali to Chagai with supplies, and provide water at Pattan-reg, must be accepted as a clear proof of his genuine desire to facilitate the passage of the Mission. The fact that his officials have been instructed to lay in supplies up to *Chagai is a significant fact, as intimating that the Amir still* regards that place as within his frontier line. It appears, however, that the Amir sent orders to the Sinjarani chief at Chagai to provide these supplies free of charge,—an order that the chief, seeing safety in distance, flatly declined to obey. Practically speaking, the frontier line between Afghanistan and Beluchistan, drawn from the Persian frontier south of Seistan to the Indian frontier near Quetta, is entirely arbitrary, and subject to alterations based on the will and interests of the local chieftains. For instance, formerly Azad Khan of Kharan was a subject of the Amir of Afghanistan, and received in virtue of his allegiance a monthly subsidy of Rs. 6000. More recently he has been an independent chief, and perpetually at feud with the Khan of Kelat; and more recently still, in fact last winter, when Sir Robert Sandeman went to Kharan and Panj-gur, he tendered his allegiance to the Indian Government—an offer that was, I understand, accepted. The renewal of the subsidy formerly granted by the Amir was a measure recommended for adoption by the Government of India, but whether adopted or not, I cannot say. There have been times when the force of events has drivent he Sardar of Kharan into the arms of Persia; but his allegiance in that quarter was never genuine or lasting. It is to be hoped that the ties that now bind him and his interests to the Indian Government may not lightly be ruptured. Azad Khan himself, however, is very old (ninety-five), though hale and hearty; and his eldest son and successor, Mir Nauroz Khan, has the reputation of being an ardent adherent of Sardar Mohammed Ayub Khan—indeed, was with him at the battles of Maiwand and Kandahar in 1880.

I hear that, as intended, the first relay of the Mission left Simungli yesterday, and consequently are at Kanak *to-day*, where Colonel Ridgeway will see them *en passant*. Owing to the small supply of water at Singbar-Chaman, the Mission

marches in three relays to Nushki. The last relay is expected to arrive at Nushki on the 27th. It was with regret that I learned this morning that Colonel Prinsep and 100 sabres of the 11th Bengal Lancers have been ordered to return to India. Such a final resolution (for many have been the orders and counter-orders from Simla) seems the more strange when it is considered that the difficulties on account of supplies and water have proved less formidable than expected. It is somewhat amusing to consider that if only the Mission had left Sir-i-Ab a few days sooner, recall would have been impossible, there being no supplies to feed the men and horses on the return journey. Once at Singbur-Chaman and they were safe. What a chance lost, and what hard lines!

NUSHKI, 22*d September*.

I arrived here this morning, and was glad to find Mr Barnes and Captain de Laessoe encamped here. Even six days' solitary marching enables one to meet and greet a fellow-countryman with renewed zest. During the six days in which I have been shut out from the world, everything seems to have undergone a change. The last thing I heard before leaving Quetta was that the Chagai route was the one; the first thing I heard on arrival here was that the Chagai route was entirely out of the betting, and that the odds were all in favour of the Kani-Galachah route. It appears that Mr Barnes, who was sent down here more than a month ago—*i.e.*, as soon as it appeared probable that the Mission would travel this way—immediately on arrival commenced an inquiry from native sources as to the respective advantages of the several routes from Nushki to the Helmund. Native opinion was strongly in favour of the Kani-Galachah route, but in higher quarters the Chagai route continued to find backers. However, the game is played out now, and backed by the reports of Mr Barnes and Captain Maitland, Kani has won the day. It is so exceedingly improbable that the public has the very smallest conception of the magnitude of the task which Mr Barnes was instructed to undertake, in collecting supplies and providing water for about 1100 men and 2000 animals

in the desert between Nushki and the Helmund, that I am justified in entering into some detail on this subject. The following are the stages from Nushki to Galachah, and the means of water-supply at each stage:—

Sanduri, 10 miles—6 wells, each 40 feet deep.
Band, 15 miles—watered by a large tank in which rain-water is collected.
Umar Shah, 10 miles—watered by tanks in which rain-water is collected.
Zaru, 7 miles—210 wells, 6 to 8 feet deep.
Kani, 18 miles—13 wells, averaging 30 feet in depth.
Gazeh Chah, 15 miles—52 wells, averaging 6 feet in depth.
Safia, 14 miles—2 wells and a tank. Water abundant.
Shah Ismail, 16 miles—20 wells, 10 feet deep, and a spring.
Salian, 10 miles—2 springs and a tank.
Muzhdan, 7 miles—10 wells and a tank.
Mamu, 12 miles—150 wells, 6 feet deep.
Galachah, 11 miles—5 wells, each 15 feet deep.

The great majority of these wells, especially the shallow ones, have been newly dug, and all the old wells and tanks have been cleaned and deepened. The springs mentioned were in most cases buried and lost in the sand. They have been unearthed, and given a new lease of life. Now, consider that this is a desert, where none but a few stray nomads live, absolutely destitute of food-supplies except grazing for camels, and here and there for sheep and goats; consequently all the labourers who dug out these wells and tanks had to be obtained from distant localities, and every mouthful of food that they and their transport required had to be conveyed to the various scenes of labour on animals which themselves had to a certain extent to carry their own food; and as a large number of labourers are still working away out there, it has been necessary for several weeks to see that food was duly conveyed to them. Add to this that Beluch sowars have from the first been posted at all the stages, for the purpose of communication and for postal service. These, too, and their horses, could not live on the sand of the Registan, or the black gravel of the "Lut." Furthermore, Mr Barnes has obtained from the districts of Quetta, Shora Rud, Shorawak,

Kanak, and other localities, and stored at each of the stages above named, 200 maunds of grass and *bhoosa*, 90 maunds of barley, 40 maunds of flour, 50 maunds of wood, 4 maunds of *ghee*, and a sufficient amount of salt and *dhall*. This is the quantity calculated to furnish one day's supplies for the entire Mission; and in addition to it as a reserve, a similar quantity has been stored at Band, Arbu, and Galachah, and half the quantity at the other stages. Roughly speaking, therefore, Mr Barnes has collected and conveyed through this desert 6500 maunds, or 1300 camel-loads of supplies—an undertaking that requires no litttle administrative ability to ensure success. These supplies, or rather the balance left unconsumed by the Mission, will be carefully guarded until Mr Barnes and his party return to Nushki from the Helmund, to which point they accompany the Mission; anything that then remains unconsumed will become the booty of any nomad or loafer who will take the trouble to go and fetch it. The two officials of the Amir who came to Chagai have now been directed to lay out their supplies as a reserve on the stages between Shah Ismail and Galachah. The Amir has been so considerate as to send down, in addition to the ordinary staples of life, tea, tobacco, sugar, opium, and other luxuries for the use of the Mission. Notwithstanding these efforts (not the least of which are the 400 water-camels which are to meet the Mission at Pattan-reg[1]), a very strong opinion prevails that the Amir has not done what he might have done; and that, had the Government of India adopted towards him a more decisive and imperious tone, he would then have bestirred himself to ensure the safe passage of the Mission by the Kandahar-Farah route. He has, however, undertaken to have the mails of the Mission to India conveyed to and fro *viâ* Kandahar. In fact, as soon as Mr Barnes leaves the Mission on the Helmund, communication with India *viâ* Nushki will cease, and the posts will be sent *viâ* Girishk and Kandahar. Later on, when the Mission nears Farah, Kandahar-Farah will be the postal route, and that route[2] will

[1] Pattan-reg is about half-way between Galachah and the Helmund.

[2] Owing to some mistaken conception, whether engendered by the Foreign

be adhered to as long as the Mission is employed in delimiting the frontier between the Hari Rud and Khoja Saleh. Under the Amir's orders, supplies are now being stocked on the road from the Helmund to Kuhsan on the Perso-Afghan border, west of Herat.

As described to me, the Kani route to the Helmund runs for some 160 miles over hard *put* (alluvial clay), winding in and out among scattered sandhills. To the right and left the road is bounded by the Registan—*i.e.*, sandy desert—more especially to the right, in which direction the Registan stretches away to Shorawak, Kandahar, and Girishk. Year by year this vast mass of loose sand is moved steadily, presumably by the action of wind alone, to the north-east, and some persons of a scientific bent have even gone so far as to gauge the rate of annual progress, and calculate in how many thousands of years the now smiling valley of the Arghandab will be a howling wilderness—a "burnt-out hell," as it has been graphically termed. Ordinary mortals, however, I have noticed, do not evince any strong interest in the eocene period of the future; let us, then, leave the future of the earth's crust to itself, and to those who make it their special study. The last 50 or 60 miles of the desert to the Helmund is in local parlance known as the "Lut," and consists in the main of black gravel, whence no drop of water is known to issue. Across this inviting spot it is proposed to march the Mission in four relays at a day's interval: first, cavalry; second, infantry, with the medical and scientific establishments; third and fourth, the heavy baggage with infantry escort. The marches will be made by night and by moonlight. On the 28th, on which date it is expected the cavalry will move to Band, the moon will be well up and give a good light as soon as the shades of night fall. It is probable that as soon as the heat of the day abates, the tents and kit will be loaded,

Office or postal officials, at the commencement of the winter of 1885-86 the Afghan Boundary Commission postal route was transferred from the Quetta-Herat to the Peshawar-Kabul, the result being dire confusion. As a matter of fact, the Quetta line has throughout remained the only reliable means of communication between India and the A. B. C. The Hindu Kush passes between Kabul and Balkh are in winter blocked with snow.

and the party will march as soon as all is ready. A political officer or a native *attaché* will accompany each relay, and will be responsible for its safe conduct. To lose the way (I cannot say path, for there is none) in this wilderness is a common thing even to a habitual denizen of it; and therefore the axiom, that the safe conduct of each relay from one stage to another demands every care and precaution, requires no demonstration. Three mounted and five foot guides accompany each relay, and at night fires will be lighted on suitable elevations near the route at intervals of three or four miles, and, if feasible, a system of signalling by rockets and magnesium wire will be arranged. It is probable that the entire Mission will march *viâ* Shah Ismail and Galachah to Khwaja Ali; but should any difficulty about water between Shah Ismail and Galachah arise, then the cavalry will turn off at the former stage and reach the Helmund at Landi, *viâ* Arbu. There is an excellent spring under the hill at Arbu. The distance from Arbu to Landi is 50 miles, and must be traversed in a single night march. However, each horse in the 11th Bengal Lancers carries a small *mussuk* attached to the girths. The infantry and heavy baggage will proceed *viâ* Galachah to Khwaja Ali, where the cavalry will rejoin them.

I am agreeably surprised with Nushki. I had pictured to myself a second Rindli;—not so. The days are a bit hot in a tent, but the strong breeze enables one to bear the heat with equanimity. True, the flies lead one the life of a dog, and the boisterous breeze spreads a film of dust over everything. However, I prefer the breeze *plus* dust rather than the heat *minus* breeze. Any one who prefers the latter alternative will have nothing to grumble at here. The present camp is pitched close to four water-mills, which have ground most of the flour collected here for the natives of the Mission. From the north-west to the south-east stretches a strangely ribbed and furrowed, ridged and hollowed range of hills, terminating to the south in a highish peak. Across this vast semicircle or arc stretches a low line of hills from the north-west to south-east, forming as it were its base. From the camp, if you look to the west and south-west over this low

line of hills, or through gaps in it, you see, some fifteen or twenty miles distant, a red hillocky barrier; that is the edge of the desert which the Mission has to cross. At present the camp is mostly represented by the five days' supplies collected here, and by a lot of wild-looking Pathans, Beluchis, and Brahuis, who doubtless are all contributing to the success of the journey of the Mission. When I rode in yesterday morning at 9 o'clock, I found Mr Barnes and Captain de Laessoe, with Sardar Aliyar Khan Raisari and the inevitable nondescript mob of hangers-on, busily employed in passing in review the camels and camel *puckals* which are to accompany the Mission. Most of the latter passed muster all right, and the remainder were put aside to be repaired and have mutton-fat rubbed into the seams. The *bhistis' mussuks* are kept filled with water under grass to shelter them from the sun's rays. By the by, in addition to *kurbee* and *bhoosa* (fodder for animals), I see stacked here a large quantity of what I conclude to be the celebrated Shorawak grass, which, being discovered in the winter of 1880-81 at the close of the Afghan campaign, conferred, so report says, on the happy finder the distinction of being mentioned in despatches. It bears a close resemblance to small dry sticks, and looks as if it would make better fuel than fodder. A hungry horse, however, is not hard to please. In the collection of supplies here, and at the stages across the desert, the neighbouring Beluch chieftains have been active in affording assistance, more especially Sardar Azad Khan of Kharan, Sardar Aliyar Khan Raisari of Kanak, and Sardar Ali Khan Sinjarani of Chagai. The supplies sent down from Quetta have been a fertile source of toil and trouble to the political officer here. Almost all of them arrived largely adulterated, but whether before leaving Quetta, or by the sowars on the road, is not certain. However, it seems likely that the sin will be brought home to the perpetrators before long. I saw some bags, supposed to contain barley, that admirably illustrated the term of "half-and-half," the other half being dirt. The water here is abundant and fairly good, but should not be kept long after being drawn off from the stream, as it contains much vegetable

matter, and rapidly putrefies. The stream here is the same Khaisar Lora that is crossed at Khaisar. I have noticed that the water of streams flowing in channels where the tamarisk grows is invariably full of vegetable matter, and speedily becomes putrid when drawn from the stream. A quarter of a mile to the south of the Mission camp lies the camp of Azad Khan, consisting of three or four tents, a stack of grass, some fifty Beluch mares and horses picketed anyhow, and the usual retainers, whose appearance cannot consistently with truth expose them to compliment.

As Colonel Ridgeway is desirous, if possible, to march the whole of the Mission *viâ* Shah Ismail and Galachah to Khwaja Ali, Captain Maitland started from here a few days ago to examine and report on the condition of the water and supplies from Shah Ismail to Galachah. The latest report from Mr Barnes's native subordinate, who has charge of that section, is favourable. Reports from Captain Peacocke of the condition and quantity of the water in the wells and tanks from Sanduri to Shah Ismail, and the rates at which the wells refill, have been received, and, all considered, the report is satisfactory. It was pleasant to read that at Umar Shah camels were daily in the habit of bathing in the tanks, and that consequently the water was very foul and full of worms, the nomads and others who frequent the place being obliged to filter it through a cloth. Still it is abundant, and a filter and boiling may render it fit for human use. Those who can will undoubtedly take on water from Sanduri or Band, and not seek to share with the nomads the privilege of drinking from the crystalline fount of Umar Shah. It is possible, however, that the several relays may march straight from Band to Zaru, merely halting at Umar Shah sufficiently long to water the animals. The distance is only seventeen miles,—less than the marches from Zaru to Kani, and Galachah to Pattan-reg.

24th September.

Mr Barnes left yesterday morning for Band, 25 miles, returning this morning. Last night at 7 o'clock a trial of the magnesium-wire light was made from the top of a hill

near the camp. It was found that a wind of ordinary velocity put it out. This is a serious drawback, as it necessitates the use of a shade; and as no special shades transparent on every side are available here, an extemporised opaque shade, open at only one side, must be used. Consequently, if the wind be blowing from the direction towards which it is desired to show a light, it is probable that the wire as soon as ignited will be extinguished. Mr Barnes at Band was looking out for our light, and says he saw once a high and star-like flare lasting some fifteen seconds. Actually we showed some seven or eight flashes varying in duration from two or three to twelve or fifteen seconds, according to the power of the wind at the moment. The longer flashes were only obtained by holding a hat between the wind and the light. The duty assigned to me here is to select a camping-ground, and frame a scheme for the organisation and distribution of the riding and water camels, *mussuks,* buckets, issue of water to men and animals at the several stages, employment of guides (five mounted and five foot accompany each relay), and establishment of signals by beacons and rockets.

I have just heard that on the 22d the whole of the main body of the Mission was still at Simungli. What can be the cause of delay? A week ago every one indicated the commissariat as the offending party; but the commissariat officer, if asked, would probably have summarily included all the other members in the list of delinquents. The commissariat has been very heavily worked, and overwork in this case, as in most others, implies short-handedness. The evil of this delay cannot be overestimated. The light of the moon for night marches across a desert that presents no land-mark, and where the nomad sojourner loses himself, is, if not indispensable, very desirable. The moon on the 27th or 28th will be sufficiently high and full to light the [illegible] throughout its long march of 25 miles from here to Band. The march across the desert for the heavy baggage and probably for the infantry, will last [illegible] [illegible]; consequently the last relay (the latest report is that [illegible]

will be formed), if it had left here on the 29th or 30th, would have reached Khwaja Ali on the 12th and 13th proximo, by which date the moon would be waning, and only visible in the small hours of the morning. But here we have still further delay. Apparently the cavalry cannot start from Nushki before the 29th. They, by making double marches, could reach Pattan-reg in ten or eleven days; not so the infantry, and least of all heavy baggage, whose arrival at Khwaja Ali is now post-dated to the 13th and 14th proximo, when the moon will no longer come forward to befriend them and guide their doubting steps. However, there is no help for it now; so, like the devout Mohammedan, let us say "Insha'llah"—all will go well. The water in the tanks is drying up, and the worms in the tank at Umar Shah are multiplying. Really this delay is very vexatious. But Colonel Ridgeway, who knows how valuable in this case is every day lost, is now with the headquarters of the Mission, and it must indeed be an insurmountable obstacle that he will recognise as a valid reason for further delay.

CAMP NUSHKI, *28th September.*

The course of the Boundary Mission thus far has been simply a series of rendezvous. Rindli, Sir-i-Ab, Simungli, and Nushki have all in turn seen the Afghan Boundary Commission gathered together, and in turn have seen, or will see, it scattered abroad; and, as far as I can see, its onward course will be cast on similar lines. We shall rendezvous on the Helmund and at Ghorian, or on the Russo-Afghan border, and possibly at a dozen places in between. Captains Gore, Maitland, and Peacocke, and Lieutenant Hon. M. G. Talbot, are all in pursuit of their several avocations between here and the Helmund, whether on the Chagai or on the Kani-Shah-Ismail route. Mr Merk is putting a finishing touch between Shah Ismail and Galachah to the work set on foot by Mr Barnes, the political officer of the Pishin. Life here has now a changed face. Yesterday morning the first relay of the Mission marched in, followed this morning by the second. All is toil and turmoil, work and bustle. Before, life was a

calm—not the calm of idleness, but the calm of reasonable and not uncongenial occupation. It was like a picnic—an outing. Men came and went,—to and from Quetta, to and from Chagai and Shah Ismail; and all experienced at the hands of the political officer here the truth of that axiom of the hospitable Briton, "Welcome the coming and speed the parting guest." For in his tents every comer was given of the best that he had; and when duty called him away, whatever he stood in need of—be it a riding or baggage camel, a guide to steer him straight across the desert, or a bottle of liquor to cheer him in his sandy solitude—he knew where to find it. The isolated and ill-provided members of the Mission whom the call of duty summoned to Nushki ahead of the main body, would indeed have enjoyed here but few creature comforts had it not been for the kind and hospitable reception accorded to all by Mr Barnes. Well, now our little picnic is over, and the face of affairs has assumed the stern expression of imperative duty. So we are working, all of us, like galley-slaves. Nushki is hot enough, although much cooler than Rindli—in fact the nights are a bit chilly. They say the desert is cooler than this, and feels fresher. One can quite understand its being fresher. The air of a place that for six weeks has been the haunt of scores of Beluchis, Brahuis, and Pathans, their horses and their camels, is not likely to be of the balmiest. However, our present duty is to get out of it as soon as possible, and not to dwell upon its advantages or disadvantages. The moon is at a premium, and we must get every day's interest out of her that we can. But before we place the desert between us and the civilised world, I feel moved to weave one more link in the chain of correspondence which will, I trust, remind those we leave behind us of our existence. Once well away from Nushki, we are in the position of an army that has deliberately severed itself from its base. The security of that army depends on its winning a battle, and the safety of the Mission hinges upon its gaining the Helmund by steady and uninterrupted progress.

The following are the arrangements for the desert march: On the evening of the 29th, the infantry under Major Meikle-

john and Mr Rawlins, accompanied by Captain Durand as political officer, Dr Aitchison, Captain Griesbach, a section of the hospital under Dr Owen, two native *attachés*, and the requisite commissariat and transport establishment and stores under Major Rind, will leave Nushki, and should arrive at Khwaja Ali on the 15th proximo. On the evening of the 30th, the cavalry under Major Bax, Captain Heath, and Lieutenants Drummond and Wright, accompanied by Colonel Ridgeway, Dr Charles in medical charge, commissariat, transport, and medical establishments, one native *attaché*, and the head-quarters of the Political Office, will start, and, passing the infantry at Band, reach Khwaja Ali on the 12th proximo. On arrival at Pattan-reg on the night of the 11th, the cavalry will find there 400 *mussuks* of water provided by the Amir's officials, estimated to contain 1600 gallons—*i.e.*, about a gallon for each man, and two gallons for each horse, mule, and pony. Having duly watered each man and beast, the relay, after a short halt and rest, again sets off, and all being well, reaches the Helmund on the morning of the 12th. The infantry or first relay fills at Galachah all the *puckals* (camel *puckals*, 105, and mule *puckals*, 29) and *mussuks* (about 125) supplied by Mr Barnes and the Commissariat Department, and takes them with them for the march from Galachah *viâ* Pattan-reg to Khwaja Ali. The first relay halts a day at Pattan-reg. Mr Barnes, the political officer deputed by Sir Robert Sandeman to pave the way of the Mission across the desert—will personally accompany Colonel Ridgeway, who will move independently from relay to relay wherever he deems his personal presence most desirable.

The third relay—consisting of the commissariat and mess stores and the heavy tents, accompanied by Captain Yate as political officer, Captain Cotton commanding the escort, and Lieutenant Yate as assistant transport officer, with a native *attaché* and the required commissariat and hospital establish-lishments—leaves Nushki on the evening of the 1st October, and, marching stage by stage, with occasional halts, is timed to reach Khwaja Ali on the 16th. The 400 *mussuks* used by the cavalry relay will be refilled and returned from the

Helmund in time to meet the third relay at Pattan-reg on the 15th. The political officer and the officer commanding the escort with each relay have been provided by Colonel Ridgeway with very clear, precise, and detailed instructions on the subject of food, water, guides, night-signals, order and method of march, &c. The water-carriage for the present is divided between the first and third relays, the cavalry having their own *mussuks*. On the arrival of the third relay at Salian on the 11th proximo, the assistant transport officer has been directed to move forward with all the water-carriage accompanying that relay, and overtaking the first relay (infantry) at Mamu, to march with it to Galachah and make all the necessary arrangements for filling the *puckals* and *mussuks*, and conveying them to Pattan-reg. The infantry escort of the third relay are, every man, mounted on riding-camels, to enable them with greater facility to carry out their duty of carefully watching the section of the long line of baggage-camels intrusted to them, and preventing loss of touch. Although each relay has ten guides—five mounted and five on foot—that number will not suffice to conduct safe to its destination a line of camels three miles in length, if it be allowed to straggle and divide itself into innumerable small sections. The water-carriage, supplied partly by the commissariat and partly by Sardar Aliyar Khan Raisari under the orders of Mr Barnes, which accompanies the Mission on its march, will, it is estimated, supply 2800 gallons at least for the use of the first relay (infantry) at Pattan-reg. At some few halting-places the camels will not be allowed to drink, but in no case will it be necessary to reduce the allowance for men below two gallons; and it seems probable that horses, mules, and ponies will get their full allowance except at Pattan-reg. The 240 riding-camels available suffice to seat about 350 of the infantry and camp-followers—in short, more than one-half of those who have no means of locomotion but their own legs.

To turn from the present to the past. On the evening of the 24th a sowar arrived, bringing a letter from Kazi Saad-ud-din, announcing his presence in Shorawak, and his

received in state in durbar, and presented with a *khillut*. It is generally considered here that his allegiance, and that of the chiefs and tribes who adhere to him, to the Government of India should be cemented by a subsidy. And yet again it is tolerably clear that none of his sons has the prestige and ability that has attracted to his side so many of the Beluch chieftains. There is no mistaking the marked respect, and perhaps affection, with which he is regarded by them. What is now the use of subsidising the aged head of a confederacy which will probably be scattered to the four winds on his demise? It seems a doubtful policy. On the other hand, if, as is thought, the route now traversed by the Mission will in future be of great value as a means of operating on the flank of a force invading India *viâ* Herat and Kandahar, then it must be admitted that the friendliness of these tribal chiefs is of paramount importance. Maybe a neutral policy is best. Preserve friendly relations now, and subsidise when more active aid is needed. These chiefs have largely aided the Mission, and the liberality with which Government has met their efforts cannot fail to be appreciated. For instance, the riding-camels procured by Azad Khan will be paid for at the rate of one rupee *per diem*, and the *puckali* camels provided by Aliyar Khan will be each paid for at the rate of Rs. 16 for the march across the desert. The mounted and foot guides are to be rewarded with similar liberality; and the Sinjarani chief of Chagai has received, or will receive, in the form of pecuniary gain to his subjects, a token of the value attached to his services. Furthermore, the safe arrival of the Mission at the Helmund will be commemorated by a judicious distribution of *khilluts* to those who are numbered among the *de civitate bene meriti*. In the existing state of affairs, with Azad Khan on the verge of the grave and a sketchy future on the horizon, such a policy seems the best. It conciliates to the British Government the goodwill, and, what is the main point, the personal interests, of the people, and yet does not involve it in the delicate position of a subsidiser. A subsidy once granted cannot be withheld without exciting rancour. I have mentioned above only a few of the benefits

that have accrued to the chiefs and tribes of Beluchistan by the passage of this Commission through it. It has been most welcome and invaluable to them as a fount of wealth, and it is to be hoped that the seed of interested and disinterested friendliness hereby established may produce a fine crop of advantageous results hereafter, to be reaped by the hand of the sower when the time comes to apply the sickle. I may add, *apropos* of the above remarks as to the value of this route for strategic purposes, that it is the opinion of the officers who have explored the several routes from Nushki to the Helmund, that the water-supply obtainable by the construction of wells, formation of tanks, and exploitation of springs is simply unlimited; that the country presents almost no difficulties to the construction of a railway, and is fitted in most places for wheeled carriage; and that the development of the water-supply would be at once attended by the influx of population and spread of agricultural enterprise. The perpetual shiftings of the drift-sand is the chief drawback.

Not much news comes in from the front. Captain Peacocke came in on the 25th, having been to Shah Ismail and back in six or seven days on a camel, and having measured the contents and rate of refilling of the wells and tanks at each stage. His reports are entirely favourable. He started off again yesterday with four native subordinates of the Intelligence branch to explore routes *viâ* Chagai and Dilbandan to Galachah. Captain Gore and Lieutenant Hon. M. G. Talbot, R.E., are respectively surveying the routes from Nushki to the Helmund, *viâ* Chagai and Kani, meeting at Galachah.

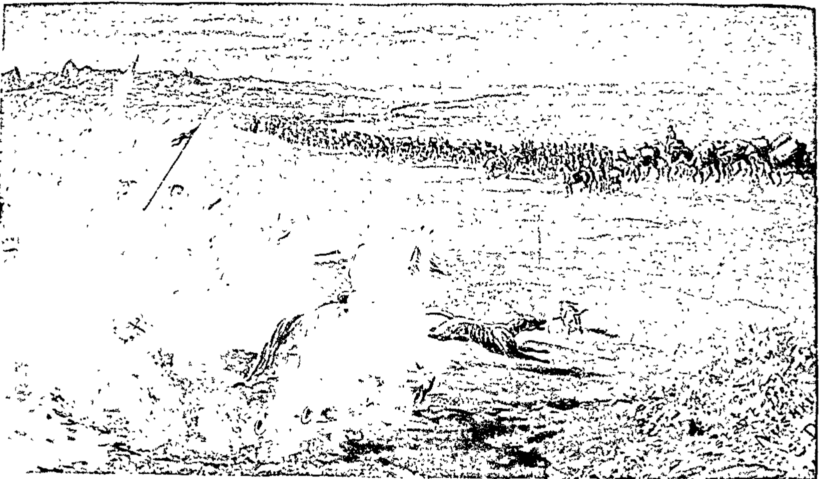
CHAPTER III.

ACROSS THE DESERT.

CAMP BAND, *3d October*.

THE despatch of the mission from Nushki in three relays on the 29th and 30th ultimo and 1st instant has been accomplished satisfactorily. Men who are accustomed to the precision and discipline of the movements of regular troops provided with organised transport may possibly smile at the suggestion that the movement of 1400 men[1] in three bodies presented serious difficulties. It must, however, be remembered that the transport of this Mission, whether for man, food, water, or baggage, consists of hired camels, which are entirely in the hands of wild and undisciplined Pathan and Beluch drivers. With such men the enforcement of discipline, as understood in the army, is impossible. You may urge, encourage, and cajole, even threaten them; but if it came to a question of compelling them, they have it in their power at any moment to decline to serve the Government any further, and then difficulties would follow. True, you can place the refractory owner in arrest, and take along his camels by force, but such a system would never answer. It is their interests, and not their fears, that must be regarded as the motive power. Of course they try to make the best of their bargain. What is more natural? They prefer, if possible, to load nothing at all on the camels for which Government pays

[1] The Indian section of the Commission was approximately composed as follows: Europeans 30, escort 465, camp-followers (including hired camel-drivers) 900—total 1395.



The Start from Nushki

Rs. 35 a-month; but as a bare pack-saddle can hardly evade detection, they seek to combine absence of weight with appearance of bulk. A pair of large cases, weighing 30 or 40 lb. each, made an imposing and yet easy load, and were much sought after. The method of providing the first two relays with transport did not admit of very extensive deceptions; but when it came to the third relay, with its 600 camel-loads of tents and commissariat and mess stores, then indeed the game began in real earnest. Everything seemed to be progressing swimmingly till the task of loading neared completion. Then, only then, was it ascertained that while many loads still lay on the ground, the camels to carry them were not forthcoming. By dint of various expedients, however—mainly by the opportune presence of a troop of fifty or sixty donkeys—everything was loaded and despatched by 7.30 P.M.: the loading began at 3 P.M. The following day at Sanduri the officers in charge of the third relay made a careful inspection of the loads as they lay scattered on the ground, and all loads deemed light were increased and readjusted. The loading began at 2 P.M., and at 4 P.M. all was ready for the march. The advanced-guard, ammunition, &c., having been sent off, two sowars were posted, and every camel had to file between them. In this way the number of loaded camels was counted, and every camel that was being sent on its way unloaded or lightly loaded, was stopped and set on one side. When all had filed through, the loads of those set aside were readjusted, and all spare camels returned to the rear-guard. In this way some system of order and discipline was forcibly impressed on the camel-men, and a correct idea obtained of the actual number of camels required and employed to carry the heavy baggage. Only in this way could an effectual check be placed on the hoodwinking and scrim-shanking games of the camel-owners.

The country traversed so far presents little of interest. It is only a flat plain seamed with sandhills—excellent in most places for marching. At Sanduri we found six deep wells that amply supplied men and horses. The camels were not allowed to drink. Here at Band is a huge tank—length and

contents unknown, enough water to supply the fabulous host of Xerxes. We had heard beforehand of the sand-grouse here, so we started off (three guns) about 8 o'clock (the mornings now are chilly—and moreover, a severe sandstorm has been blowing since daybreak) along the banks of the tank. We certainly walked one and a half miles in pursuit of our *shikar* —we found duck and teal, and even a few snipe, besides an incessant influx of thirsty sand-grouse—and even then we had not reached the end of this tank, although in width and depth it had become but a tithe of what it is at the Band itself. On arrival here at 11 P.M. last night, were Colonel Ridgeway and Mr Barnes with the cavalry still here, also the Amir's agent. However, by the time we ventured to put our noses outside the *chicks* of our tents this morning, our relay alone represented civilised man on the plains of Band. I exclude from the above heading a few nomad Mingals (Brahuis), a small plot of thirsty-looking tobacco-plants, some bulrushes, and a variety of water-birds, including the small blue kingfisher. The cavalry are at Zaru to-day. We march to Umar Shah this afternoon, carrying water with us from here to obviate the necessity of drinking the worm-infested liquid which the nomads there declare to be water.

CAMP GAZEH CHAH, *7th October.*

I closed my last letter at Band, the second stage from Nushki, and this one I commence at the sixth stage, where we are halting for a day to give the camels the rest and leisure for grazing that they decidedly need. The men need no such rest, for all of them, down to the lowly sweeper, has his steed, be it horse, mule, pony, or camel. The infantry escort of this, the third relay or echelon (as it is officially termed), are all to a man mounted on riding-camels, and the followers are mounted promiscuously, some on the top of a camel-load, others astride an empty camel *puckal,* and the sick in Moseley crates slung on the back of a camel. Ingenious and excellent for their light simplicity as are these crates, I feel sure that some form of foot-board or foot-support is essential to their comfort and completeness. These crates are, how-

ever, made for carrying baggage, not men; their use now in place of *kajawas*[1] is exceptional. To sit for hours with the leg from the knee downward dangling in mid-air is wearisome, nay more, intolerable to any man; and from observation I came to the conclusion that a march for a sick man in a Moseley crate consisted in an alternation of efforts to attain ease and rest by coiling and uncoiling the legs. To the sick man a day's relaxation from this vain striving after the unattainable, and to the camel a day's holiday in which to make up for the short commons of the past, and, if he be a provident camel, to lay in a reserve stock for the future, must be alike welcome. Poor camels! what with denial of water at one stage, and absence of grazing at another, and last, not least, the presence of a poisonous shrub or grass at a third, life at Zaru has not been a bed of roses for them—not, indeed, that a camel would desire such a bed, for they are known to have a remarkable partiality for thorns. Zaru wrought sad havoc in their ranks. Its reputation as the charnel-house of camels is of old standing, and as usual in such cases, the mysteries of superstition are called in to explain the handiwork of nature's products.

There is a Mohammedan shrine at Zaru called Ziarat-i-Saiyad Mahmud, and to that Ziarat is of course attached a fraternity of fakirs. Well, I say fraternity, but as I was not introduced to the *andarun* of their luxurious mansion, constructed of plaited grass and woven twigs of tamarisk, I am not prepared to vouch for the existence of none but fraternal relations between the members of this band of devotees. Indeed I can only hope that the chief fakir, with whom I conversed, and whom I found to be singularly wanting in general intelligence, may sometimes be able amid the solitude and privations of his lot to turn for solace to the bosom of his family. The dulness of his eye in no way belied the density of his intellect; and yet that lack-lustre orb is endowed with a weird and mystic power. Woe to the caravan *bashi* who passes this way, and neglects to win the heart and ward off the cold gleam of the fatal eye of that fakir! On the morrow he will wend

[1] A kind of pannier for camels or mules.

his onward way, leaving the carcasses of a score of camels to feed the vultures and prove a warning to the next comer. And not easily appeased is that eye which duly appreciates and values its own prestige and power. Our caravan *bashi* gave him five rupees, and was graciously permitted to go on his way with the loss of only seven camels. The sudden way in which these camels were seized, fell down, and died, struck a perfect panic in the breasts of the owners. At nine or ten o'clock in the morning all the camels were seen trooping back into camp. No more grazing for them that day. The minds of the camel-owners were harassed between two doubts. While cursing their head-man for not having presented the fakir with a sufficiently liberal *douceur*, they at the same time intimated that there might be some truth in the report that there grew around this camp a deadly poisonous grass whose seductive toothsomeness lured the unwary camel to its doom. The camel *jemadar* himself declares that he watched the camels, saw one approach a shrub, browse on it, stagger, and fall down. Its fall was speedily followed by its death. This, however, is not conclusive proof that that particular plant is the fatal one, and the majority of the camel-men confessed that they had failed to ascertain the root of this evil. It is possible that the fakir of the deadly eye may know; but naturally he has no inclination to disparage the special virtue of his own visual organ for the credit of the lowly offspring of a sandhill.[1]

The public may imagine possibly that our march is one of drear monotony. The march itself may be briefly depicted in the following parody on two lines of (I think) Barry Cornwall—

> "So band by band 'cross the desert sand
> We march to the light of the moon."

But it is not monotonous this life. Every day, every march, every stage has its own individual features, whether features of events or circumstances, of situation and scenery. Why, the sight of a tree is an event here! At Umar Shah we camped close to a splendid tamarisk, and hard by stood a row of

[1] A third and not the least probable explanation is, that the villanous fakir smears the plants on which the camels feed with some poisonous compound.

willows over which towered a high sandhill, threatening ere long to bury them alive. This morning I went a mile out of my way to visit two trees seen in the distance. I imagined there must be water where there is verdure. I found but two dry old tamarisks in a rugged torrent-bed. At Sanduri we clambered up the sandhills in the morning, and took a last farewell of the mountain-range behind our camp at Nushki, and watched some flocks of the pelican of the desert, who, as they regained warmth under the genial rays of the sun, rose on the wing slowly, and then, soaring in wide circles, wended their way leisurely, still ever circling, to I know not where, southward apparently. Marching as we do late into the night, we are not as a rule early risers. Then comes breakfast, followed by an hour or two devoted perhaps to making pen travel over paper, or in urging the ever-recalcitrant and argumentative Beluch, Pathan, or Hindu, to the performance of his duties. About 2 P.M., before you know where you are, the loading bugle sounds, and then down goes your tent and the bustle begins. The first day at Nushki the loading of the heavy baggage began at 3 P.M., and it was not till 7.30 P.M. that the rear-guard moved off. Next day at Sanduri loading began at 2 P.M., and every baggage-camel was *en route* before 5 P.M., notwithstanding that they were obliged to file between two lances—firstly, with a view to detecting and turning back lightly loaded camels; and, secondly, to check the numbers actually loaded. As Government has undertaken to pay Rs. 35 a-month for every camel that carries four maunds with the Mission, the owner who has condescended to place his camels at the disposal of the Sirkar for such modest remuneration, feels it incumbent on himself to endeavour to make a little something extra. Therefore he has a passion for loads bulky in appearance but intrinsically light. A man who is detected marching off his camels with loads of from two to three maunds and turned back to put up four, considers he has a grievance, and his expression of injured innocence were a fitting study for the artist's pencil. Band, the second stage, is admirably adapted for taking a census. Every camel and every driver (in fact, the whole of the third relay) had to pass

in single file across the dam. Such an opportunity was taken full advantage of. Since the second stage from Sanduri to Band all has gone well. The rear-guard gets off between 5 and 6 P.M., and, according to the length of the march, the advanced-guard reaches the next camp between 8 and 11 P.M., followed by the rear-guard some two hours later.

So far the moon's rising light has immediately succeeded to and replaced the waning light of day, consequently halts have been unnecessary; but in future, as soon as darkness sets in the advanced-guard will be halted to allow the line of camels to close up, and a similar halt will be made from time to time, as circumstances require, until the moon is well up. Once a man loses the track in this desert, he is in a ticklish position. A sowar of the 11th Bengal Lancers managed to lose himself between Band and Zaru on a bright moonlight night—how, he alone can explain. We hear very little of the infantry and cavalry echelons, except that they are getting on all right. Sometimes we get a polite message from them as follows: "Sorry we've drunk up all the water before we left; hope you will find a little when you arrive." As the wells refill here from twice to thrice daily, this amiable wish on their part has hitherto always been gratified.

At Band we were treated to a very fine dust-storm—altogether an unusually fine specimen of its kind. We shot sand-grouse and duck and teal in the midst of it, and very good sport we had too. At Umar Shah, which is a tank, formed by rain-drainage off the sandhills, we also had some good sand-grouse shooting, as long as it lasted. These birds come to drink between 8 and 10 A.M., and if they come in large numbers the fun is fast and furious. Numbers of nomad families of Mingal Brahuis live at Band and Umar Shah, and combine agricultural with pastoral pursuits. At Kani, too, nomads reside, and the hollows between the sandhills everywhere bear the traces of their previous habitations. Zaru is a large level space surrounded by sandhills, and after rain is evidently a swamp, as the stumps of reeds and rushes still standing show. The flat surface of this level area is now relieved by no fewer than 220 pits, some six feet deep and three

feet in [illegible]
ingenious man [illegible]
out of these [illegible]
all the others was [illegible]
affirmed that he had [illegible]
sipped the water [illegible]
pleased his fastidious [illegible]
ed to us his discovery just as [illegible]
curious history [illegible]
as a European, and [illegible]
recognise him as a [illegible]
Afghans as an [illegible]
that he was found [illegible]
in 1879-80. He then made his way [illegible]
seen at Simla [illegible]
ity, or in some [illegible]
he appears to have been [illegible]
capacity to have [illegible]
him as a man [illegible]
Persian, [illegible]
English [illegible]
parts of Afghanistan [illegible]
over twenty [illegible][2]

From the [illegible]
the [illegible]
level [illegible]
mountains [illegible]
up with [illegible]
northern end of the [illegible]
west. As far as [illegible]
splendid [illegible]
Kani and [illegible]
or formed of [illegible]

[1] *Pagri* is a native head-dress [illegible]
30 feet long, wound [illegible]
Lota is a metal drinking-vessel [illegible]

[2] I hear that he has [illegible]
Light Infantry.

known in Sind as *kullur*. Marching in such soil is most fatiguing. Kani camp lies in a hollow among rolling sandhills. There are a dozen deep wells scattered in groups of three or four in these sandy basins. The remains, too, of a score of old nomad habitations are evidence of the comparative abundance of what is here the staff of life. From Kani to Gazeh Chah is a long fatiguing march of 18 miles, followed by two still more fatiguing ones—from Gazeh Chah through a long stony defile to Safiya, and from Safiya through a sand-strewn valley to Shah Ismail. The water at almost every stage is more or less brackish; but, curiously enough, here and there a well or pit of comparatively sweet water is found in close proximity to wells whose water is decidedly unpleasant to the taste. At Gazeh Chah we found 52 shallow wells with small tanks attached for watering animals. At Safiya the water-supply was obtained from two deep, narrow wells, excavated in the solid rock. Each of these wells would refill, if emptied, in half an hour, so plentiful is the supply. These wells, to the depth of some five feet from the surface, were lined with intertwined tamarisk boughs and twigs: such lining, when new, of course imparts an unpleasant flavour to the water: below this, the sides of the well appear to be of solid rock. They are the only wells I have seen on this route that have any pretension to finish or completeness, and even these were not provided with covers to keep the drift-sand out when not being used.

SHAH ISMAIL, *10th October*.

It is most difficult in this perpetually peripatetic existence to snatch even a brief hour for writing. At 1.30 P.M. the camel-bugle sounds, and then begin the roaring and grunting, the shouting and bawling, the striking of tents, the packing of kits, the adjusting of pack-saddles. At 2 P.M. the "dress" bugle sounds, and by that time the camels are all ready in their allotted positions, and the loading begins. At 2.30 follows the "fall in," and after that the ammunition on mules, under a cavalry escort, and the advanced-guard of the 20th Panjab Infantry on camels move to the front. It is not perhaps generally known that the Mission is accompanied by

a fine corps of mounted infantry, or, if you prefer the title, a camel corps. The banks of the Helmund, as well as those of the Suez Canal and the Nile, will witness the advent of this the latest "gym" of military science. Yes! 100 of the 20th Panjab Infantry, mounted on 100 of Sirdar Azad Khan's riding-camels, are an important feature in the escort of the Mission; and if Colonel Ridgeway reviews his little army on the Helmund for the benefit of the Afghan, our camel corps will march past creditably. I doubt, though, if their line in a march past would dare to throw down the gauntlet to a wall. Most of these camels are young, untrained, and frisky, except such as are too weak and miserable to be either, and many are the edifying spectacles they afford us at the start. I'll defy any fellow not to laugh at a camel executing rapid circles round a nose-string with a Beluch warrior with sword, shield, and gun bedight at the end of it, and a luckless sepoy or follower clinging on to the saddle with grim tenacity. Well, one must not look a gift-horse in the mouth, they say, though in good sooth there is little of a gift-horse about these riding-camels. The drivers get a rupee a-day and rations—probably never had such a good time of it in all their lives; and yet they threw down their ration of flour, *ghee*, and *dhall* at the feet of the commissariat sergeant the other day, because he, having no sheep to spare, was unable to give them the ration of meat which they had hitherto received! A good sound flogging would have been the best reply to such insolence, but such behaviour is truly worthy and characteristic of the Oriental. All natives with the Mission, whether soldiers or followers, receive an extra ration of meat, tea, and sugar — an indulgence that *in toto* was not extended to the troops lately serving in Afghanistan.

Mais revenons. I was just in the act of getting the heavy baggage of the Mission under way, when the attractions of our camel corps seduced me into a digression. The advanced-guard having taken up its position a few hundred yards out of camp along the road, the camels as they are loaded move out and form up behind it. Then when the political officer

heavy baggage start together on the evening of the 14th, and reach the Helmund on the 16th.

Heliographic communication between Garmashki and Galachah will be carried on; and should any hitch in the return of the water-camels from the Helmund for the use of the second party occur, the latter will be advised, and its departure postponed. Each party carries with it from Galachah a further supply of water in *puckals* and *mussuks.* Precise orders regulating the time and order of march and carriage, and the issue of water and rations, have been issued, and all arrangements for guides and beacons completed. We estimate the distance to Garmashki at 26 miles, and thence to the Helmund 25.

The heavy baggage arrives here to-morrow, and on arrival at the Helmund it will be consigned to the Amir's officials, who will escort it through Afghanistan, following one day's march behind the main body of the Commission.

Kazi Saad-ud-din is ill at Mamu, but is expected to rejoin us shortly. His sowars may be regarded as his suite, and not as any escort to the Mission. No additional Afghan escort will be provided beyond the Helmund; and as for the rumour of an escort that is to protect us from Turkoman raiders between Sabzawar and Ghorian, that may be viewed as an excellent farce.

On the 19th, Mirza Yakub Ali leaves us at Khwaja Ali, taking with him our last outward mail *viâ* Nushki. He withdraws the postal sowars as he goes. From that date our outward mails will be sent with such regularity as is feasible along the Helmund to Kandahar, until we near Farah, when that will become our nearest post-town, and subsequently our posts will go and come *viâ* Farah and Herat. If possible our inward mails will be forwarded from Kandahar *viâ* the Helmund as long as that is the nearer route, and after that from Farah towards Seistan to meet us. Colonel Ridgeway has addressed the Governor of Farah on this subject. With regard to parcels: Mr Barnes, the political agent in Pishin, is to receive them, and as soon as a few camel-loads have been collected, will hand them over to a respectable

Afghan trader for conveyance to us, invoices of the contents of the loads being sent to our news-agents at Kandahar and Herat—Mirzas Hashim Khan and Mohamed Takki Khan.

On the 19th we leave Khwaja Ali, cross the Helmund near Ashkanik, three marches beyond Rudbar, and then follow Khanikoff's route in 1858 *viâ* Lash-Juwain (and some 20 miles west of the main route through Farah, Sabzawar, and Herat) to Kuhsan. Between Khwaja Ali and Kuhsan three halts of one day each will be made—two of them near the Seistan border, when inquiries will be instituted by Colonel Ridgeway into the nature of a dispute existing between the Persian and Afghan Governments relating to the Seistan frontier, as fixed by Goldsmid and Pollock in 1872. The only report on our trans-Helmund route that we possess is based on a letter from the Amir. The distances therein given can at best be regarded only as approximate, and the statements about water must be cautiously received. However, if difficulties arise, the main road can always be reached in a day's march. It is, however, deemed inadvisable, owing to the reported inimical tendencies of the inhabitants, to follow the main road. Beyond the Helmund the Commission will throughout its march take all the precautions customarily observed by a force in an enemy's country. The officers of the Survey, Intelligence, and Scientific Departments will, whenever considered perfectly safe, conduct their investigations and researches under escorts provided by the Amir's agent.

Captain Gore and Lieutenant Talbot have respectively surveyed the Kani and Chagai routes, and the results of their independent labours have on comparison proved entirely satisfactory, several important points having been fixed—in particular, that of Kuh-i-Khanishin on the Helmund. They have every hope of successfully continuing their work. Captain Peacocke, after leaving Nushki on the 27th ultimo, crossed the Pishin Lora *hamun* to Chagai, 30 miles without water, and thence *viâ* Robat and Sakalik to Galachah. His report of this route compared with that taken by the Commission is unfavourable. The water-supply is inferior, and less capable of development. The road is longer and more difficult for

troops, and in some places so heavy with sand as to be impassable for wheeled vehicles and artillery. The grazing is, however, better, and Chagai affords some supplies.

KHWAJA ALI, *17th October.*

Had it been daylight when we first, after our 225 miles of desert marching, set eyes on the limpid (I speak comparatively) waters of the Helmund, flowing onward between banks verdant with willow, poplar, and tamarisk (there is not a village within eight miles of this camp, nor an acre of tilled land), we might possibly, animated with some small portion of that sense of joy and relief which drew from the lips of Xenophon's Greeks, on first sighting the Euxine, that expression of long-pent-up feeling and hope long deferred, that one short cry, "The sea! the sea!"—in that case, I say, we might possibly have joined in "three cheers for the Helmund." Most, however, if not all of us, wound our way wearily down to its banks in the dead of night; and the cold miasmatic vapour, rising from the water and the tamarisk, sent a shiver through our bones, and any enthusiasm that at a distance may have burned in our breasts, at the near approach oozed out at our numbed finger-tips.

The nights here are much chillier than on the uplands of the desert. We are encamped on a narrow strip of heavy sand close to the river, and from morn to eve a ruthless wind blows from the west up the river-bed, and whirls clouds of dust through the camp. At eventide one's kit is so successfully disguised beneath a layer of sand, that one feels disposed to apostrophise it in the terms with which our friends generally greet us when we go home on furlough—viz., "I should not have recognised you." The cavalry, which arrived here on the morning of the 14th, state that the heat on that and the following day was unpleasantly great; whereas since we arrived yesterday morning, dust by day and chill by night have been the evils of the hour. The natives say that two winds rule supreme here, and that they, weary of contending for supremacy, made overtures of peace, held a conference, and amicably agreed that each for a week alternately should

hold the reins of power. As for the one at present seated on the *masnad*, I can only say that his rule is not characterised by that urbanity and mercifulness towards his subjects which becomes every good and just monarch. Possibly he is guided by the maxim, "Whom I love, I chastise."

I hurriedly closed my last letter on the 11th at Salian, having received orders to reach Galachah without delay. Accordingly, with great difficulty, thanks to having ventured to place a modicum of trust on the word of the camel-contractor, I got my baggage under way before mid-day, and then rode hard to Muzhdan (11 miles in an hour and a quarter), hoping to overtake the infantry before they left that camp. They too, however, had also marched at mid-day, and I gained naught by my haste but the risk of fostering splints and sprains on the legs of a young horse. At four o'clock my camels came up, and having seen them fairly *en route* for Mamu, I rode on leisurely to that camp, dined and slept there, and reached Galachah next morning, where I found Colonel Ridgeway and the cavalry. The question of the moment was, of course, the march across the 58 miles of waterless desert to the Helmund, and I think that the word "water" might have been found stamped in capital letters on our brains.

On the evening of the 12th, the day I reached Galachah, the cavalry baggage started for Garmashki under escort, followed by the main body of the cavalry at an early hour on the morning of the 13th. Colonel Ridgeway having seen the infantry arrive, and ascertained that the arrangements for the march of the infantry and heavy baggage to the Helmund were complete, started for Garmashki about mid-day on the 13th. It had been decided that the infantry, which reached Galachah on the evening of the 12th, and the heavy baggage which was due there on the evening of the 13th, should march together to the Helmund. The only objection to this arrangement was the fear that the camels of the heavy baggage would, without a clear day's rest, be unequal to the long march to the Helmund—a fear not without foundation, considering that those camels, but indifferently fed and

meagrely watered, had been marching in a country affording but poor grazing for twelve days, the marches averaging in length 15 miles, and the time of duration of each march, from commencement of loading to end of unloading, averaging eleven hours. Actually these camels were allowed at most six hours a-day for grazing, and at many camps the grazing was a mere name, especially after the cavalry and infantry camels had been let loose amongst it. Fortunately a few *seers* of barley per camel were available at most stages, otherwise the above rapid rate of marching could not have been maintained except at the risk of having to abandon a considerable quantity of stores. As it is, all went well, and the camels did their 58 miles from Galachah to the Helmund in thirty-six hours without the loss of one animal or load. The union of the infantry and heavy baggage was attended by the important advantage that there was little or no risk of any failure in their water-supply. They carried with them from 800 to 900 gallons of water—sufficient, supposing that the 400 *mussuks* of water to be sent from the Helmund by the Amir's officials should from any cause fail to reach Garmashki in time, to stave off the pangs of thirst. As it happened, both sources of water-supply were available, and every man and beast (except the camels) had a reasonable allowance. The cavalry, except 22 *puckals* containing about 300 gallons which accompanied them from Galachah, depended solely on the 400 *mussuks* from the Helmund. These duly met them on the morning of the 13th at Garmashki, and as soon as emptied were sent back to the Helmund, to be refilled and returned for the use of the infantry and heavy baggage. The whole thing went like clockwork. The second party, which numbered 902 men (including camel-drivers) and 212 horses, mules, and ponies, was allowed one gallon per man, and from two to three gallons per animal. Fifty of the 400 *mussuks* from the Helmund were reserved for the use of Kazi Saad-ud-din, who, being seriously indisposed, was obliged to remain behind at Galachah. He arrived here this morning, and is reported to be now fairly on the way to recovery. The road from Galachah here is by no

means plain sailing for troops or transport. Twelve or thirteen miles from Galachah, a little beyond a spot termed "Sor-reg" (though why it should have a name at all is a mystery), a belt of deep, shifting, billowy sand-drifts is encountered. In this loose and treacherous footing our horses were repeatedly brought down on their knees; and as for the ammunition and treasure mules, I more than once saw them floundering helplessly on their sides in the sand, unable to rise till their loads were removed. Camels fortunately are more at home on suchlike going, and neither flounder nor fall.

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arrived here this morning, and is reported to be
the way to recovery. The road from Galachah

banks which we obtained presents but few distinctive features. The bed of the river itself is merely a stretch of tamarisk jungle relieved by clumps of poplars, varying in width from one to two miles or even more, amid which the waters of the Helmund flowed glistening in the sunlight. Some three miles above Khwaja Ali (the place takes its name from a mud tower near our camp, said to have been built and inhabited by one Khwaja Ali—further details about him were not forthcoming) the river forms two branches, which reunite just above our camp. On either side the banks consist of a series of sandy undulating hillocks rising gradually to a plateau, the distance between the two plateaux being about seven miles. Behind us on the right or northern bank stretched similar sand-strewn undulations as far as we could see. Not a trace of habitation or cultivation could the eye detect anywhere, save only our nomad camp. Even Khwaja Ali or his posterity seems to have found the locality more than human nature could endure. Possibly the reported battles of the winds were too much for them. To-day the wind and dust have been pleased to grant us a holiday, and I think we have all fully appreciated the boon. We can most of us digest our dinners without the assistance of grit.

It has been a busy day for all. The owners of the riding-camels which Sardar Azad Khan of Kharan was good enough to place at the disposal of the Mission, have been dismissed to their homes with a liberal gratuity, and his youngest son, Sardar Amir Khan, was presented with a suitable *khillut*.[1] As before stated, a few of these camels have been purchased for the use of the Mission. The greater portion of the commissariat stores and heavy tents which have been handed over to the Amir's officials, and loaded on camels, supplied by them, are just now (10 P.M.) leaving camp for Landi Barech, our next halting-place. It is intended that these stores should be thus conveyed one day's march ahead to Kuhsan. There has been some little difficulty with the camel-contractor, Abdullah Khan Nasiri. The intrustment of the heavy baggage to the Amir's officials for conveyance has, of course, taken

[1] A gift conferred as an honour by a superior on an inferior.

the bread out of the mouth of a number of his camel-owners. Whether or not this had anything to do with a little affray that sprang up yesterday evening between his *sarwans* (camel-drivers) and the Amir's men, I cannot say for certain. Whatever the cause, the whole camp was set on the *qui vive* about 6 P.M. by a great uproar near the tents of the Amir's agent, who arrived yesterday morning from Galachah. It happened that Abdullah Khan's camels were just then returning from grazing on the right bank of the river. It is said that one of the animals strayed among Kazi Saad-ud-din's horses, and that the advent of this unwelcome visitor impelled the Kazi's sowars to the use of abusive epithets. Opprobrious terms soon blossomed into offensive blows, and then there was a brief but animated *mêlée* with sticks and stones. Abdullah Khan will carry the marks of it to his dying day in the shape or misshape of four teeth dislodged by a—for him—too truly aimed stone; and not a few of the warriors on both sides retired from the conflict decorated with insignia which proved that they had been in the thick of it. The prompt arrival of several of our political officers on the spot soon put a stop to the fray, but none too soon, as it seems probable that sticks and stones would ere long have been abandoned for more deadly weapons. Among Abdullah Khan's *sarwans* is one Khuda Nazar, nicknamed among his fellows, owing to his prodigious strength, "Pahlwan," and reputed to be a match for any six ordinary men. I am told that he was seen at Quetta to throw four men, who had maltreated a chum of his, one after the other, down a *karez*. This doughty warrior was seen standing with a smiling countenance in the middle of this affray, scorning to spoil a fair fight by the exercise of his redoubtable powers. Having put a stop to the conflict, the political officers ordered Abdullah and his men back to our camp; and as they were very excited at the injury their chief had sustained, and breathed vows of vengeance, measures were taken to prevent them leaving camp limits. This morning, when their blood and fury had been cooled by the chill night air and a night's rest, a deputation of them, headed by a native *attaché*,

was sent over to the Kazi's camp, and the late rival combatants were induced, if not to shake hands *à l'Anglaise*, to disavow any intention of renewing the quarrel. The site of the Kazi's camp was admirably adapted for shielding the occupants from the wind and dust which to us have been so fertile a source of discomfort. It lay snugly ensconced under the lee of a high bank crowned by a clump of poplars.

RUDBAR, *20th October*.

Yesterday at 3.30 A.M. *réveillé* sounded, and before daybreak the cavalry and infantry main bodies were *en route* for Landi Barech, leaving the baggage to an escort of cavalry and infantry, and two or three officers detailed for that duty. The main body of the cavalry and infantry led, followed by the baggage in three parallel lines in charge of the transport officer, assisted by three native *attachés*. The rear-guard was commanded by a European officer, and flanking parties of cavalry protected both flanks of the baggage. This disposition will probably be maintained throughout our march to Kuhsan, except that the three parallel lines of baggage will be subject to modification by the nature of the route. Our baggage-camels will number about 700, to which must be added about 200 spare camels for the purpose of replacing casualties and mounting the infantry rear-guard and a portion of the followers. As the condition and equipment of the camels supplied by the Amir's officials is by no means as satisfactory as could be desired, it is intended that the whole of Abdullah Khan's camels—viz., about 360, *plus* the 900 already mentioned—should accompany us for one or two stages. Should it then appear that the provision for the transport of the heavy baggage made by the Amir's officials is likely to prove adequate, the—at present—unemployed surplus of camels belonging to Abdullah Khan will be dismissed to find their way back to Pishin. They will have no difficulty in returning either by the Kani or Chagai route. Water they will find in plenty, and of food they can easily carry a sufficiency for a fortnight's journey. Small caravans frequently travel by both these routes.

we shall have a rest to-morrow! Thank heaven, no getting up at three o'clock to-morrow morning!" True for the last bill; but as for the first, the man whose sanguine imagination couples the word "halt" with "rest," is doomed to disappointment. Rest! Every halt seems to mean a reduplication of the toil. The hours spent on the march are the hours of peace and rest, and the moments spent at the halt are the moments of toil and unrest. On such occasions blessed indeed is he that expecteth little, for he shall not reap disappointment, whatever he may reap. There is, however, one hour of the day when the vision of rest realises itself, and yet only then by defrauding the human frame of its natural rest—viz., the after-dinner hour. We dine early in camp—in fact, as soon after sunset as possible; for when *réveillé* sounds at 3 A.M., the hours of sleep are few and precious. In the artificial existence of modern civilisation everything tends to invalidate the soundness of the good old maxim steadily drummed into our ears in the days of our youth by our elders (forgetful of another maxim equally sound in theory and equally liable to transgression, "Practise what you preach")—viz., "Early to bed and early to rise, is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise." In camp-life, *au contraire*, all tends to necessitate the observance of this model rule of life; and if it fails to bring with it an influx of wealth, it undoubtedly imparts a healthier tone to systems inevitably enervated by the insalubrity of an Indian climate, and to minds insensibly impaired by the monotony of Indian existence and the narrow range of thought and interest of Indian society.

I have up to this point left unnoticed the progress of the researches and operations of the scientific members of the Mission. It is full time that such an omission were atoned for.

The work of the Survey Department is one of primary importance, inasmuch as the country which we have traversed and which we are about to traverse has rarely, and in some places never, been visited by any European traveller, far less been scientifically surveyed. If we except the journey of Christie in 1810, and the travels of Sir Charles Macgregor and Captain Lockwood in 1877, the desert tracts of Northern

Beluchistan are entirely innocent of the "footprints in the sand" of European travellers. At the time when Generals Goldsmid and Pollock were deputed in 1872 by the Home and Indian Governments to settle the Perso-Beluch and Seistan frontiers, Sir Oliver St John and Colonel Lovett were enabled to survey the country through which the Mission moved, and the labours of the first-named officer and of Major the Honourable G. Napier have furnished the Survey Department with accurate maps of Khorasan and North-Eastern Persia and of the Herat valley. Based on the travels of Grodekoff and Prejavalsky, and the work of the Russian topographical survey, the latest and best maps of Herat and Afghan-Turkistan have been produced. The travels of Sir C. Macgregor through Eastern and Northern Persia in 1875 were also productive of an extended topographical knowledge of that country. With regard, however, to the route which the Mission is about to follow from the Helmund to Ghorian, no European, I believe, but Khanikoff has ever before set foot on it, and he only in part, and with a rapidity that precluded the possibility of accurate observation. The field of labour therefore now thrown open to the operations of the survey of India is one of unusual extent and interest. All that lies between Nushki and the Persian frontier is, from a survey point of view, a *terra incognita*, and it is the hope and aim of the officers of that department now with the Mission to successfully carry out the important task allotted to them, and so connect the Indian triangulation system with the survey work based on traverses and observations of latitude and longitude conducted in Persia by St John and others. As far as the Helmund these hopes were amply fulfilled. Captain Gore surveyed the route *viâ* Kani and Shah Ismail, and Lieutenant the Honourable M. G. Talbot the route *viâ* Chagai to Galachah, and on arrival at that place a comparison of the results obtained thus independently left no room for doubting their accuracy. Furthermore, the peak of Kuh-i-Khanishin, on the left bank of the Helmund, about thirty miles east of Khwaja Ali, was trigonometrically fixed, and on the arrival of the Mission at that river there seemed every reason to hope

that the work so successfully begun would be successfully continued. Major Holdich, who was at the last moment transferred from the Zhob expedition to take up the post with the Afghan Boundary Commission vacated by Major Hill invalided, overtook his subordinate officers at Galachah, and there assumed the direction of the work of his department. At Khwaja Ali and Landi Barech the clearness of the atmosphere was favourable to trigonometrical observations; but on the subsequent marches, when time did not admit of moving far from the line of march, and the configuration of the high ground on either side of the river rendered a distant view unattainable, the necessary observations could not be made. On the 22d the thickness of the atmosphere proved an insurmountable obstacle; and on the 23d, when the officers of the survey remained behind at Chahar-burjak, in the hopes of obtaining the observations essential to the completeness of their work, the atmosphere was equally unpropitious. In fact a dust-storm blew all day, as it has done to-day. It has been ascertained that the present position of the Kuh-i-Khan-ishin, as shown on the most recent maps, is 16 miles too far east, and that a similar but gradually diminishing error affects all places on the Helmund west of it up to this point. The result of this survey will be an important rectification of the present maps of the Helmund and the surrounding country. Galachah, for example, occupies on the maps a position at least 20 miles west by north of its real position on the face of the globe. As the trigonometrical observations which it was hoped would be obtained from various points on the Helmund have been rendered unattainable for the reasons above mentioned, the accuracy of the survey between Landi Barech and Kalah-i-fath depends on the traverse which was carried through without a break at the rate of 18 miles a-day. From Kalah-i-fath a range of distant hills is visible to th west and north-west, supposed to be the Sarhadd hills, ob servations to which have been taken. As the route of th Mission henceforth runs nearly due north, traverse distanc will be fairly checked by latitude observations. In conclu ing this brief summary of the labours of the Survey Depa

ment, I cannot refrain from expressing my admiration for the zeal and enthusiasm in the pursuit of science which induce men, after a hard day's work, to snatch a hurried meal in discomfort, and devote, every night, some hours of well-earned rest to astronomical observations. I also take this opportunity of recording the latitude and longitude of some of the principal points on our route, for the information of the general public. I am indebted to the courtesy of the survey officers with the Mission for the details:—

	Lat.	Long. E.
Kani, ...	29° 34′ 30″	65° 5′
Galachah, ...	29 43	63 40
Khwaja Ali, ...	30 15	63 6
Rudbar, ...	30 10	62 37
Khaju, ...	30 11	62 19
Chahar-burjak, . . .	30 17 30	62 4 50
Kalah-i-fath, . . .	30 33 35	61 53 20

PADHA-I-SULTAN, *25th October*.

We left Kalah-i-fath this morning. The country we have traversed during the past three or four days westward from Rudbar should be dear to the souls of the philosophers of the pessimist school, if, as the title they bear would imply, they are ever moralising on the vanity and uncertainty of all things human, and hunting for proofs in support of their theories. They might search further and find less evidence of the soundness of such tenets than the banks of the Helmund afford. From Rudbar to six or seven miles north-west of Kalah-i-fath our route has conducted us through a very labyrinth of ruins of various stages of antiquity. I am no archæologist, and in that respect I have the honour to recognise the local Beluch as my coequal. To his intelligent and cultivated mind what is ancient is Kayani, and what is Kayani is ancient. But if you strove to ascertain in what his conception of antiquity consisted, or when he believed the Kayani dynasty to have flourished, you would speedily discover that he had never heard of the rival systems of chronology of Usher and Newton, and that he was not prepared to pronounce judgment on the respective merits of the Bible and

geological theories of the world's age. In fact, the sum of his conceptions on this point may be expressed in the terms of "long, long ago." For my part, when I come across the ruins of buildings made of mud and sun-dried brick (some of the remains, however, were of kiln-dried brick), I take old Kandahar as my standard. We all know that it was laid waste by Nadir Shah about 1730 A.D.; and knowing this, and having a fair recollection of the present state of its ramparts, citadel, and lesser edifices, we can by comparison with it estimate approximately the age of structures of similar nature and material. Some parts of the citadel of old Kandahar were constructed of, or buttressed by, stone-work; whereas in this neighbourhood I have not noticed one single hewn stone used in any description of building. Sun-dried brick is the main feature. Burnt brick is comparatively uncommon. At the south-east angle of Kalah-i-fath stands a tomb or caravanserai faced with burnt brick, and six miles north of the same city I remarked that the *débris* of some ruins was mainly composed of burnt brick. Add a small dome, whose interior had evidently been exposed to fire-heat, and might have been a kiln for burning bricks or tiles, and my list is finished.

I had almost forgotten to mention a tomb of burnt brick situated a quarter-mile to the left of the road on the edge of the plateau shown five or six miles south-east of Kal'ah-i-fath, which is associated by an interesting legend with the brick caravanserai to which I have just referred. The tomb in question is known far and wide by the name of "Gumbad-i-bana-i-yak-dast"—*i.e.*, the tomb of the one-handed architect. The story goes, that in the days of Abd-ul-fath, one of the Kayani kings, and the reputed founder of Kalah-i-fath, there lived an architect of great skill, who, by the king's orders, furnished designs for and superintended the construction of the caravanserai. So pleased was the monarch with this edifice when completed, that, forgetful of the laws of gratitude and justice, he vowed that that structure should stand the unique monument of his and the architect's fame. By his command the luckless architect forfeited the right hand which had made him the envied of all, and yet the victim of envy.

Long he pondered on the king's injustice, and inwardly breathed silent vows of revenge. Finally he decided that to thwart the king's jealous and selfish ambition would be the bitterest revenge he could take. He left the city, and on the barren plateau hard by, he, unaided but by the inspiration of revenge and the skill of his own left hand, erected the massive tomb which stands a memorial to ages to come of his masterly handiwork and his king's futile injustice. In the last and choicest production of his powers of design and workmanship the architect lies interred.

I think there is little doubt that the majority of ruined forts, cities, and various edifices strewn in marvellous profusion over the fifty-six miles of the valley of the Helmund and Seistan plain, from Rudbar to beyond Kalah-i-fath, are contemporary with, or more recent than, the old city of Kandahar. Not unnaturally the ruins of forts or citadels are most conspicuous, their greater size and solidity presenting a longer and stouter resistance to the assaults of the atmospheric forces. One of the native *attachés* of the Mission informed me that, according to local tradition, seven of the ruined forts near our camp opposite Khaju were reduced to ruins by the Emperor Baber, and that two ruined forts on the right bank of the river between Rudbar and Khaju bore the names of Abkhur-i-Rustam and Fa-kashak-i-Rustam. That some of the ruins we saw should date from the reign of Baber is far from improbable; but that mud forts of the era of Rustam, in whose family the viceroyalty of Seistan was vested under the Kayani dynasty, should still present a tangible and describable shape, seems more than improbable. It becomes a moot point whether these were isolated forts or the citadels of considerable towns or cities. So numerous are they, that if we consider each of them to have been surrounded by more or less considerable areas of dwellings and public buildings (an opinion that in many cases is supported by the traces of walls and bastions and outlying buildings around them), we at once ask ourselves—"Whence did the enormous population which formerly must have occupied this valley obtain their food-supplies?" However fertile the soil, and however extended

the area of land formerly under cultivation, it could not have sufficed for the hundreds of thousands of mouths demanding sustenance from it. We must therefore suppose that the necessaries and luxuries of life essential to the support and comfort of this veritable human bee-hive were to a great extent imported, and there is nothing improbable in this supposition. Besides the resources of the Helmund valley from Girishk to the Seistan Hamun, the food-supplies of the valleys of the Arghandab, Tarnak, and Arghasan, and of the whole of Seistan, would be available, irrespective of more distant sources of supply; and in addition to the local manufactures which must have given employ to the non-agricultural portion of this vast population, the manufacturing towns of Yezd, Kirman, and Birjand, not to mention Ispahan and Shiraz, were easily accessible. Did the people of former times utilise the Helmund as a trade-route? We have followed the course of that river for 100 miles, and I have seen nothing to authorise the belief that it is not navigable for boats of light draught. It is said to be now at its lowest, and yet the fords are over three feet in depth. There is little doubt that boats could descend it easily; and there seems no reason to doubt it could, like the Indus and many other Indian rivers, be navigated up-stream by small sailing-vessels. The Nile *nugger* might be introduced here with advantage when the banks of the Helmund are once again tenanted by a flourishing people. It is a notable fact that at the present day not a vestige of a boat or craft of any sort is to be seen on this section of its waters; and this leads to the conclusion that in former times also it was not used for navigation. At the ford at Khaju we found a boat sent down from Girishk to assist our passage. It was about 30 feet long with 9 feet beam and 20 tons burthen. There is no ground to suppose that the former inhabitants of the banks of the river were in the habit of navigating it by draught (as in our canal system), even if it were practicable.

To revert to *terra firma:* there is a local rumour that between Rudbar and Ashkinak exist the remains of a palace of Cyrus, known by the name of Kalah-i-Madar-i-Padshah. The

mention of the name of Cyrus carries one's thoughts away to Persepolis and Isfahan, and the tomb of Cyrus, locally known as the Takht-i-Madar-i-Suleiman, north-west of Shiraz, and the ruins of Shapur near Kazerun, with their solid, almost cyclopean masonry, and finished architecture and sculpture. One is loath to believe that the monarch who built the splendid halls of Persepolis was content with a mud palace on the Helmund. Yet necessity knows no law. No stone suited for building purposes is obtainable in this neighbourhood. Even the alabaster quarries near Galachah, whence the reigning Amir recently transported to Kabul several hundred camel-loads of slabs for the adornment of a mosque or tomb which he is said to be constructing, produce material only suited for the exterior facing of a wall or pavement of a floor. Consequently the great Cyrus may have been constrained, when he visited his province of Seistan, to content himself with an edifice of sun-dried brick. I cannot, however, say that I saw any building that had the appearance of dating from the era of the great Persian monarchy. According to Bellew, most of the Seistan ruins date from the period of Taimur Lang's invasion in 1383 A.D., and are of Arab origin.

Some noteworthy ruins lie grouped around Kalah-i-fath. The remains of that city itself, with its striking citadel on the eastern face, are interesting on account of the tragic occurrence which obliterated all trace of the greater part of it from the face of the globe. Accuracy of date is out of the question; but, according to current rumour, some years ago the Helmund, being in flood, burst the bounds of its customary channel, and coming down with irresistible force on the town of Kalah-i-fath, washed away at least two-thirds of it, leaving not one brick standing on another. Certain it is that now one of the channels flows over ground once occupied by the central part of this town, and half a mile to the west of it a clump of poplars is pointed out as the former site of the western wall. After this catastrophe the small uninjured remnant was deserted by its inhabitants, or what remained of them, for it seems improbable that such a disaster was unattended by heavy loss of life. Who these former inhabitants

were I could not ascertain. Some eight years ago Sardar Mahomed Sharif Khan Narui, then settled with his tribe at Kalah-i-nau and Sharifabad in Persian territory, being at feud with the Amir of Kaïn, besieged him in his fortress. The arrival of a body of Persian troops obliged him to raise the siege and to take refuge in Afghan territory. Subsequently he repaired to Kabul, and tendered his allegiance to Amir Sher Ali Khan. At the request of the Amir he brought his tribe from Kalah-i-nau and settled at Kalah-i-fath. He is at present at Kabul, having been summoned there by Amir Abdur Rahman, who is said to entertain some suspicions of his fidelity to himself. According to the statement of a native of Kalah-i-fath—evidently a sincere admirer of his chief, since he informed me that he (Mahomed Sharif Khan) was famed in all the four quarters of the globe—the Amir is pleased to grant a subsidy of Rs. 40,000 per annum to this Beluch chief. I learn, however, from Kazi Saad-ud-din that the actual amount of the subsidy is Rs. 20,000 paid to Sharif Khan, and another Rs. 20,000 to his nephew at Khash. So my informant was not, as I supposed, drawing the long bow. He was right as to the amount, but misinformed me as to its destination.

The subjects of Mahomed Sharif Khan term themselves Naruis or Sheranzis. On inquiry it appears that the Naruis are a section of the Sheranzi tribe. Sardar Imam Khan and his son Sher Mahomed Khan at Chahar-burjak are Sinjaranis. The former is said to be paralysed. Sardar Ibrahim Khan of Chakansur, the reputed murderer of Dr Forbes in 1841, is at present an exile at Jahanabad in Persian Seistan. He is said to have declined to obey the Amir's recent summons to Kabul, and was in consequence turned out last year, and replaced by an official nominated by the Amir, universally known by the cognomen of the "Akhundzada," who is under the orders of the Governor of Farah, Sardar Mahomed Yusuf Khan. Some men of the labouring class here with whom I had conversation, voluntarily remarked that they were much better off under the rule of the Amir's representative than under that of Ibrahim Khan, and explained their meaning in the

following expressive terms: "Neither of them has ever given us anything, but the present governor takes less away." Some of the peasantry, however, and probably the majority, entertain different views. All, however, mention, with an air of gratitude and satisfaction, that as yet—*i.e.*, for a full year—the Amir has taken no revenue from them. According to their statements, land-tenure is based on the following terms, simple but somewhat unremunerative to the tenant—*viz.*, one-third of the crop to the Amir, one-third to their chief, and one-third to the cultivator, the last named supplying the seed. The crops here are entirely dependent on irrigation, none on rain. Rain falls in limited quantities, probably insufficient to render probable the arrival at maturity of a crop dependent solely on it.

There is little doubt that in the neighbourhood of Kalah-i-fath exist the buried ruins of cities of great antiquity. I even heard it suggested that this might be the site of the famous city of Pasargadæ. Certainly the great area covered with countless mounds of all shapes and sizes lying to the east of Kalah-i-fath suggested that excavation there might not be in vain. However, as the limited period of our stay did not admit of excavations being made, we are none the wiser. I could not ascertain that the local residents had any suspicion or legend of the former existence of a great city on that spot; in fact, the sum total of their replies amounted to this, that they were new arrivals, and knew nothing about it. They entered, however, with interest and animation into a description of the extensive ruins of Sar-o-tar (some pronounce it Sur-o-tur), some twenty miles east or north-east of Kalah-i-fath. Their practical statement of the distance to these ruins was, that if a horseman started from Kalah-i-fath at sunrise, he would reach Sar-o-tar at afternoon-prayer time. They spoke of the coins, turquoises, and gold found there; and I subsequently heard that after a heavy fall of rain a general excursion was invariably made by these people to Sar-o-tar, to collect the treasures which the beneficent hand of nature thus brings to light, and that the sale of these collections to passing traders moving between the great centres of commerce

was an important item in their means of livelihood. Certain it is that very few of these curios were to be found on the spot. Indeed it is well known that the antiquarian in search of his pet weaknesses will find them, not on the spot where they are actually discovered, but at the trade centres to which they invariably gravitate. Some coins and seals were, however, procured by the more fortunate or more energetic inquirers after them; many coins and curios have since been obtained.

DEH-I-KAMRAN, *26th October.*

My letter from Rudbar gave my first impressions of the Helmund. This country presents no variety of natural features, nor indeed of artificial ones. The channel of the Helmund is the same throughout, a broad bed of tamarisk and poplar, intersected by one or more water-channels according to the sweet pleasure of that river, which at one time glories in rolling along in single grandeur, and again delights to ripple away in two or three minor streams, which, as they bid each other adieu, may fondly murmur, "When shall we three meet again?" And meet again they do, sure enough, a few miles lower down. Beyond Rudbar the southern line of bluffs which has hitherto pursued a westerly line, parallel to the course of the river, trends somewhat to the south, leaving a broad slope of undulating gravelly soil, a naturally macadamised plain (only clear away the loose pebbles) between itself and the river, and beyond Ashkinak takes a southwesterly direction, and then the broad plain of Seistan opens out before the traveller's gaze, stretching away to the far horizon, against which looms a dim range of hills or mountains—the Sarhadd hills, I believe. Opposite Chahar-burjak, 67 miles from Khwaja Ali, at the close of our fourth day's march, we forded the river, which there runs in three channels. The water in the deepest part was rather over three feet. Ropes on tressels both above and below the ford were stretched across each branch; in fact, the arrangements made by the Amir's officials for our safe passage were all that could be desired. Not the slightest casualty or mishap occurred, unless I may include under that head the spirit of devilry (*alias* the desire

for a bath) which induced a young horse I was riding to lie down and roll with me in the water, very much to the detriment of my saddlery and outfit in general. The spectators on the banks evidently thought it an excellent joke.

From this ford, ever memorable for me, to Kalah-i-fath, we had a nice little march of 23½ miles, leaving the river four miles beyond Chahar-burjak, and taking a bee-line across the elevated plateau of undulating gravelly hillocks and level *put* which borders the Helmund on the right. Eighteen miles from Chahar-burjak we again rejoined the river, and soon came in sight of the walls and lofty citadel of Kalah-i-fath. Our first post since the 18th at Khwaja Ali met us at Chahar-burjak, and a welcome surprise it was, and speaks well for the goodwill of the Amir and his officials towards us. We have since had posts in regularly, and we send out posts daily for India. On the same day at Chahar-burjak a special messenger from Herat brought a letter from the Governor, Sardar Sarwar Khan, enclosing one from Sir P. Lumsden. Postal communication has now been established between us and Sir P. Lumsden, and letters for Europe can be now forwarded *viâ* Herat and Teheran.

We halted on the 24th at Kalah-i-fath, and there the consignment of all our reserve commissariat and mess stores and heavy tents to the Afghan escort was completed. It is so arranged that this heavy baggage leaves the camping-ground daily as soon as possible after the main body has started. The hour of *réveillé* is at 3 A.M.; and now that things are in thorough working order, the rear-guard is enabled to start directly that daylight permits the officer in command to ascertain for certain that no person or thing is left behind. Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din, with a small escort of the 11th Bengal Lancers, is in charge of, and accompanies, the heavy baggage. The Mission has every reason to be satisfied with the arrangements for its pleasant and peaceable transit through his territories made by the Amir, and for the general friendliness and willingness to aid shown by his officials. In addition to an ample supply of the necessaries of life, the Amir makes handsome presents continually

of tea, sugar, candles, tobacco, and other luxuries to all ranks of the Mission; and almost every camel, or horse, or pony that has strayed *en route* or out of camp, has been recovered by the sole exertions of the Afghan officials, and that, too, in a country where poverty, and I think I may say education, renders the population prone to robbery. Some few days ago Captain Durand lost a valuable *waler* on the march. Kazi Saad-ud-din—so he informed me—at once gave the people in the neighbourhood a choice of two things: either to recover and return the horse, or pay a fine of Rs. 2000. The horse was recovered to-day.

The march to Padha-i-Sultan yesterday, and thence to Deh-i-Kamran to-day, as regards the natural features of the country presents nothing worthy of notice. The ruins have become fewer, and some six miles beyond Kalah-i-fath dwindle into insignificance, at least outwardly.

CAMP IBRAHIMABAD, 28*th October*.

Descending the Helmund from Khwaja Ali, the first inhabitants met with are Barechis, of the same stock as the Barechis of Shorawak. From Rudbar to Chahar-burjak the country is in the hands of Beluchis of the Sanjarani tribe, whose chief, Sardar Imam Khan, lives at Chahar-burjak. Not that all the subjects of this chief are Sanjaranis. Some of them with whom I conversed styled themselves Kharakins; and on being asked if they were Sanjaranis, replied in the negative with a gesture that unquestionably implied an acknowledged inferiority of position. It is supposed that these classes are in a position of semi-bondage to the Sanjaranis, and are mere labourers, owning no property either in land or cattle themselves. At Kalah-i-fath we find Beluchis of the Narui section, or, as they also termed themselves, Sheranzis; and near Nada Ali, a branch of the same section under Sardar Fakir Mahomed Khan are the tenants of the soil. Riding from Nada Ali to Deh-i-dadi, I chanced to overtake the last-named Sardar, and had some talk with him. Some eight months ago he had a severe fall from his horse while chasing a wild boar, and sustained an injury to his hip, which threatens to

trouble him for life. He was coming in to see Dr Owen, in the hope that he might benefit by his medical advice and treatment.

Between Padha-i-Sultan and Deh-i-Kamran, some two miles to the west of the road, is the Seistan Bund. I visited it. It is constructed of plaited tamarisk boughs, and has to be renewed or repaired every year after the spring floods. Just above it, a canal, some 25 or 30 yards in width, diverts a considerable portion of the waters of the Helmund for the irrigation of Persian Seistan. The remainder flows onward in its natural channel, more or less parallel to the route we are following to the Hamun. In former and more prosperous times there was no Hamun, the water of the Helmund being exhausted for purposes of irrigation. Taimur Lang, in the fourteenth century, did all he could to damage the irrigation system of Seistan, besides sacking its towns. He seems to have been animated with the bitterest hatred for the Seistanis: some state, in explanation of this implacable resentment, that his lameness was due to a wound received in his first raid into Seistan. On arrival near the Bund, I found Kazi Saad-ud-din there with his suite, among whom was Mahomed Saiyid Khan, a son of Sardar Mahomed Sharif Khan of Kalah-i-fath. Since I met him (the Kazi) first at Nushki, I have had no chance of intercourse with him. Long marches and our duties in camp leave us all but little leisure for the mere courtesies of this world. Presuming on my introduction at Nushki, I went up and paid my respects to him. He received me courteously, and offered me the usual cup of tea, thus giving me the opportunity for conversation which I desired. He stated that this Bund was formerly constructed a little lower down the river; but that the Amir of Kaïn took advantage of the difficulties in which Afghanistan has been involved of late years to transfer the Bund to a point above the fort of Kuhak, which is situated on the Persian side of the river, between it and the canal. It is now held by a small force of Persian infantry. This change in the site of the Bund would necessitate a corresponding change in the position of the canal's mouth, and I have [illegible] able to

ascertain that any such change has been made. Some remarks by Captain (now Colonel) Euan-Smith,[1] may perhaps explain the real alterations made in the Bund by the Amir of Kaïn.

About five miles north-west of Deh-i-dadi, at a place termed Band-i-shamshir, there is a small and rather dilapidated Bund on the Helmund, above which a small natural channel some two feet deep diverges to the right or Afghan side, and ultimately flows into the Naizar. The land enclosed on the west by the main channel of the Helmund, on the east by the minor channel, and on the north by the Naizar, is claimed by the Persian Government. The Afghan Government contends, on the other hand, that the main channel of the Helmund is the boundary between the two monarchies, and that consequently the disputed tract is rightfully Afghan territory. Warshufta is the name given to it. If the Helmund is the recognised boundary between Persia and Afghanistan, then the main channel of that river, and not any minor offshot, should be held to be the true boundary; and the attempt of the Persian Government to push their frontier beyond the main channel should be held to be an unjustifiable infringement of the terms of the settlement. Moreover, it appears that the Afghan Government has nine points of the law in its favour, inasmuch as both banks of the lesser channel are inhabited by Afghan subjects. It is said, again, and apparently with truth, that the Helmund has recently shifted its main channel westward. If so, the Persian claim may prove not ill-founded. This is a point, however, which should be decided according to the laws dealing with river boundaries —laws which, unlike those of the old Medes and Persians, but like many rules and regulations of the present day, admit of a most accommodating variety of application and interpretation. Here, however, evidence only on the Afghan side has been gathered, and it is not at present intended to attempt more. To-morrow morning Colonel Ridgeway, attended by several other political officers, rides out to the Naizar, distant some ten or twelve miles. The results of the

[1] Goldsmid's Eastern Persia, vol. i. p. 281.

Seistan settlement of 1872 were, briefly,—Down to Kuhak both sides of the Helmund, Afghan; from Kuhak north to a point almost due west of Chakansur, the Helmund forms the boundary between the two kingdoms; beyond which again both banks are Afghan, the frontier bending to the north-west so as to include the Hamuns both of the Helmund and the Farah Rud within the limits of Afghan territory.

Although the banks of the Helmund no longer support a teeming population, they are by no means a desert waste. Certainly not a desert in the true sense of the word, since labour alone is required to transform the plains, where tamarisk and camel-thorn now grow in wild profusion, into productive fields of wheat and barley, *jowar*, peas, and cotton. At this time of the year, when the autumn crops have been gathered, the country to a cursory glance presents an extremely barren aspect. It is only on closer inspection that one detects great areas of land on which the stubble of last season's wheat and barley crops is still standing; and here and there one comes across large heaps of grain and stacks of *bhoosa*, stored generally on the threshing-ground itself. Eggs, milk, chickens, sheep, and melons are fairly plentiful. A kind of pea locally termed "mash" is also produced. The people here catch fish in weirs. We had for dinner one night a very excellent fish caught in the Helmund. Often as I have looked on the waters of that river, I have never yet seen a fish rise. The limited number of herds and flocks here is also noticeable, and accounts for the small value placed on dry fodder.

At Padha-i-Sultan we encamped in the midst of a large field of *jowari*, the stalks of which (familiarly known in India as *kurbee*) were seemingly regarded as not worth cutting and stacking. Our horses, having lived on *bhoosa* for six weeks, by no means evinced so sovereign a contempt for good food. Similarly the wheat and barley straw is only gathered in a very perfunctory manner, enough being left standing or lying to support any number of animals; and although this country is overgrown with luxuriant jungle and scrub, that could afford sustenance to thousands of camels, that animal

is rarely seen. When 200 of the camels procured for us by the Amir's agent bolted in the night from our camp near Khaju, it was with difficulty that 100 were collected at Chahar-burjak and Kalah-i-fath to replace them, and then only by sending for them to the districts further north. The supplies for the use of the Mission are, as I have before stated, obtained in the main locally, and are popularly supposed to be a forced contribution levied on the inhabitants. It is a question, however, whether such obligatory contributions convey to the mind of the Afghan subjects the same sense of injustice and extortion that they bear in the sight of the freeborn Englishman. It may be that the conditions of land-tenure in Afghanistan subject the tenant or landowner to these extraordinary contributions, just as much as to the payment of a certain percentage of the yield in kind, or to the equipment of a certain number of horse and foot soldiers at need. Or, again, the supplies now exacted may be taken in part payment of the revenue in kind. During the last two days I have remarked several infallible signs of the more prosperous condition of this district—viz., more villages, more inhabitants, a greater area under cultivation, more herds and flocks, and a great increase in the number of canals and minor irrigation channels. So numerous, indeed, were the latter, that the progress of the baggage was greatly delayed by them. Fortunately the march to-day was unusually short, only seven or eight miles. All the bridges were mere temporary structures, and gave way either entirely or in part before the long line of 1300 or 1400 camels had crossed it. Where the country is open, the camels march in several lines abreast. Here both the denseness of the jungle and the frequent recurrence of narrow bridges made a single line obligatory. Occasionally the fore or hind legs of a camel would disappear through a bridge, and then all had to halt till the poor beast, lucky if he escaped uninjured, was extricated.

The exit from the last camp was a truly animated scene. Some 300 yards out of camp was the first bridge over a canal, about 30 or 40 feet broad. The infantry and cavalry main

bodies having crossed with becoming order, the baggage followed on, and then came the tug of war. The enrolled transport-driver, trained to some sense of discipline, is hard to manage in a position where order and patience are supremely necessary; but when it comes to the independent Beluch or Pathan, who heeds no command unsupported by moral or physical force, then, indeed, the preservation of order is a herculean task. Not only had the united onset of six or seven strings of camels—each pressing forward to reach the bridge first—to be met and resisted; but in the very act of meeting this front attack, we found ourselves taken in flank by the baggage-camels of Kazi Saad-ud-din and his following. The contest was truly exciting, load crashing against load with a scrunching sound, that made one feel thankful that one's head was not in between. So tightly packed, however, were the camels, that they mutually assisted each other to keep their loads in their places. With the exception of many a broken *mahar* (nose-string), to the detriment probably of many a camel's nose, no great amount of harm was done. Fortunately no heads were broken, though I saw portions of the commissariat oven, tent-poles, spears, and big trunks and cases swaying to and fro in a manner very suggestive of concussion of the brain. The united efforts of several European and native officers, aided by some sowars and sepoys, employing such weapons of hand and tongue as nature has gifted mankind with, succeeded in cooling this ill-timed spirit of emulation among our camel-men, and in inducing them to believe that half-a-dozen camels abreast could not cross a rickety bridge without danger to life and limb and load. The passage of the baggage across the bridge was then effected with some semblance of order, although it required all our vigilance to prevent the opening scene being reacted.

At Deh-i-Kamran our escort was increased by a small body of Afghan regular infantry summoned from [illegible] kang, which we passed on our march to-day. It [illegible] that Sardar Ibrahim Khan, late of Chakansur, [illegible] Jahanabad in Persian territory, just across the He[illegible]

as the whole or most of the Beluch population in this neighbourhood are strong partisans of his, and view with disfavour his replacement by an Afghan governor, it was deemed not improbable that he might incite them to attempt an attack on our camp or on our line of march, with a view to bring discredit on the Amir's arrangements for our unmolested passage. Latterly, in consequence, our sentries and baggage-guard have been increased, and at night Afghan sentries are posted outside our own.

The fort of Kalah-i-kang is of some size, being more or less of a circular shape, with a diameter of 200 yards or more. The walls, which are of no great height or strength, are surrounded by a broad deep ditch full of water. It is barely a year since it was occupied by Afghan troops sent down from Farah, and its defences are still in process of being strengthened. The military headquarters of this district, under command of a *sartip* (colonel), are at Chakansur, distant some seven or eight miles east by north of Kalah-i-kang; and a detachment is quartered at Burj-i-asp, where the main road from Nasirabad to Chakansur, near Nada Ali, crosses the Helmund. This route is one of strategical importance, as from Chākansur it continues *viâ* Khash to Girishk. It will be seen by reference to the latest survey map that the road between Girishk and Farah is crossed, near a village called Langhera, by a stream named Shandu, whose further course is marked by dotted lines to a point near Chakansur. If, as is supposed, water is to be found, either on or near the surface of this channel, it will also acquire some importance from a strategical point of view. Native information estimates the garrisons of Chakansur, Kalah-i-kang, and Burj-i-asp at 400 sowars and 1000 infantry, all irregular troops. The cavalry are entitled "Sowar-i-khudaspa," or "Khawanin Sowar," and the infantry "Jazailchi" or "Khassadar." The actual strength of the force quartered in this district is probably somewhat less. Ibrahimabad, which was settled and founded by Sardar Ibrahim Khan, was reduced to ruins last year by the Amir's troops.

Riding from the Seistan Bund towards Nada Ali, one sees successively on the Persian side of the Helmund the forts of

Khwaja Ahmed, Shahristan, and Sharifabad. The two former are said to be now deserted—the latter occupied. Nada Ali and its neighbouring mounds of Surkh-dak and Safid-dak are visible for miles around. In thus spelling the last two names, I have the authority of the distinct pronunciation of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, whom I carefully interrogated, supported by the testimony of Euan-Smith,[1] who thus remarks: "Dak-i-Dehl derives its name from a Sistani word dak, which signifies mound or hill." Etymological discussions may seem inappropriate here, but as the correct names of these mounds have been a good deal misused, I may be excused. These two words are pronounced Spidak and Surkhak by the Biluch chaw-keeon (may the Prophet pardon me for associating the name of a good Muhammadan with guilt in any form!)—but these are mere provincial corruptions of the true names. Surkh-dak is, of course, "red hill," and the origin of this name is accounted for in the following story. In former days (i.e. once upon a time) a person, be he king or general, fired whether by lust of conquest or by enmity, came with an imposing army and proceeded to besiege Nada Ali. With this object he fortified Safid-dak and Surkh-dak, connecting these two points by a line of fortifications, of which traces are still easily distinguishable. The thousands of burnt bricks lying about lead one to suppose that the assailant contemplated not merely a temporary fort, but a lasting dwelling-place of men. However, while he was thus plotting the destruction of Nada Ali, the people of that city were no less active in counterplotting; and one day (it may have been a fine one) the red brick ramparts and bastions that proudly crowned the summit of Surkh-dak were elevated to a still prouder position in the circumambient air, and after a short aerial flight returned to earth once more, covering the mound-top and its slopes below with a rich red carpet of bricklats. Hence its present name. Seeing that Surkh-dak is fully half a mile from Nada Ali, the successful conduct of a mine from the one to the other [illegible] well for the engineering skill of the besieged. [illegible] relics of its former prosperity, lie around [illegible]

[1] Goldsmid's Eastern Persia, [illegible]

among which is a tower reputed to have been built by some king unknown, for a daughter equally nameless. The name Khushk is attached to it. This tower is the best architectural specimen that has as yet been seen in Seistan. At the foot of Safid-dak stood a ruined windmill. Not a single mill, wind or water, have I seen in working order in this country. I am, however, informed that there are two water-mills at Rudbar and one in Kalah-i-kang.

IBRAHIMABAD, *29th October.*

We halted here to-day. At 6.30 A.M., Colonel Ridgeway, accompanied by several members of the Mission and an escort, started for the Naizar, for the purpose of obtaining information bearing on the boundary dispute to which I have already referred. We rode to a mound some 10 miles west by south of Ibrahimabad. The mound was a heap of earth some 15 feet high and 50 yards in circumference, and was, I found, despite its insignificant proportions, dignified by the name of Silagh-sar, a name that may be translated "spit-head." When at Cambridge I used to gaze with some amusement at the line of hillocks bearing the imposing title of the "Gog-Magog Hills." There, as here, it is the extreme flatness of the surrounding country that invests the most trifling eminence with an exaggerated importance. These little mounds are all known here by the general term of "Puzak," or "little noses." To reach this mound we crossed many water-channels of varying width and depth, and traversed belts of tamarisk jungle, intersected by patches of once marshy ground and by effete fields of *jowari*. One or two villages we passed, the hovels as usual built of tamarisk matting and straw or grass, daubed occasionally with a little mud. All the villages hereabout are of the same material. One can but conclude that the inhabitants are *quasi* nomads, changing their abode as the exigencies of their pastoral and agricultural pursuits demand. It appears that the pursuits of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood are mainly pastoral. I noticed during our ride this morning large flocks of sheep and many cows grazing. Camels also are more numerous.

The basis of the dispute between the Persian and Afghan

Governments about this Naizar appears to be this. The people of several Persian settlements on the western side of the Naizar possess a very large number of sheep and kine (20,000 it is roughly stated), and pasture them in the Naizar. The Afghan authorities maintain that the Naizar is Afghan territory, and if the Persian herds and flocks graze there, they must pay a poll-tax to the Afghan Government. The Persians again state that they have grazed their flocks and herds there from time immemorial, and if they are deprived of this grazing-ground it will be a serious loss to them, and they have an old-established prescriptive right of grazing their cattle there. From conversation with the Beluch peasantry, it seemed that they personally had no objection to Persian cattle grazing in the Naizar. The point at issue is, to whom the tax on herds and flocks owned by Persian peasants, but grazing in Afghan territory, should be paid. From what we saw of the Naizar, which stretches from the Hamun of the Helmund to the Hamun of the Farah Rud, and which is annually flooded, it is nothing but a waste of hard, dried mud, covered with dead or dying reeds. Verily, what went we out for to see? Some reeds not shaken by the wind even, for there was not a breath stirring. Anyhow, that is all we saw.

CAMP TAKHT-I-RUSTAM, *31st October.*

Yesterday we marched 16½ miles to a camp near Makbara-i-Abil, and thence, to-day, some 16 miles to the camp from which this is despatched. We are on the banks of the Helmund Hamun, whose wide waters, reed-girt and ruffled by a boisterous north-west wind, stretch west and south-west as far as the eye can see on a dusty hazy day. To-morrow we march to Lash Juwain.

CAMP PANJDEH, NEAR LASH JUWAIN, *1st Nov.*

I looked forward with some interest to seeing the twin forts which established custom has linked in the one name of Lash Juwain. If I had been asked why, I could not have given any specific reason beyond the fact that the name had, in my mind's eye, held a prominent position among the features of

Seistan. It may have been that it is printed in large capital letters in the map; it may have been the perusal of Bellew's and Euan-Smith's descriptions. Whatever the reason, the place was in reality but a name to me. If I had any preconceived notion of the appearance of the twins, you may feel sure that, like all such preconceptions, it was very far from the reality. As we reached the brow of each successive fold of the plateau we crossed during our march to-day, I looked eagerly forward for the waters of the Farah Rud, and the pair of strongholds that, as I pictured to myself, reared their proud walls on either bank, and kept jealous guard over the approaches to the stream. As it happened, it blew a gale of wind from the north-west all day right in our teeth, and the dust raised by hundreds of camels obscured the air. Some say this wind blows incessantly during the four winter months at Herat; others, that the four months' wind for which Herat is notorious blows in the summer,[1] and that beyond Anardara, the fifth march from Panjdeh northward, there is a cessation of wind and an increase of cold. Naturally the weather will become chillier as we attain higher elevations. At present this wind is bearable, though even now in the early morn it sends a chilly shiver through the body, and the dust it brings plays sad havoc with the eyes. But when this boisterous blast careers through an atmosphere in which the mercury in the thermometer stands below freezing-point, then indeed we shall need all our ulsters, *postins*, cardigans, Balaclava caps, fur-lined cloaks, chamois-leather waistcoats, gloves, and mitts, to keep it out. Supposing, however, that the condition of the atmosphere to-day had been favourable for a view, the following panorama would have been spread before us, as we gazed north-west towards the Farah Rud from the edge of the plateau of gravel and sandstone that lies between here and Chakansur, and which we have been skirting and crossing during the three last marches. To our right and left the plateau on which we stand sweeps in a

[1] The latter is correct. See Morier's Haji Baba, chap. xi.: "This wind, which lasts for 120 days during the summer months, and without which the inhabitants would almost die of heat," &c.

curved line north and south towards the Farah Rud, which flows at a distance of some seven miles from north-east to south-west. Beyond the Farah Rud, and running more or less parallel to its right bank, rises a scarped sandstone bluff, culminating in gravelly slopes similar to the one on which we stand. Away to the west, or west by south if the day be clear, we see the green plains bordering the Farah Rud stretching far away, and beyond, on the dim horizon, the Kuh-i-Bandan. To the north, and at no great distance, we see the Kuh-i-kalah-i-kah (also called Kuh-i-Imam Zaid, for a reason to be given hereafter), towards which to-morrow we shall direct our march. The broad semicircular plain below us looks attractive in its greenness. From the midst of its carpet of grass tufts, camel-thorn, wormwood, and dwarf tamarisk stands up the fort of Juwain; while around, for some miles northward and southward, stretch the ruins of some populous city of olden times. Slightly to the left of Juwain, which is only about four miles distant, and two or three miles beyond it, the fort of Lash crowns an isolated and commanding headland of the bluff that overhangs the right bank of the Farah Rud. Nothing can be more dissimilar than the position and general aspect of these so-called twin forts. The one in the centre of a verdant plain, a quadrangle with four bastioned walls of mud; the other on the edge of a cliff, its walls rising in tiers from base to apex of a sheer precipice. And now that the one (Juwain) is in the hands of a *Saghzai* (this is the local pronunciation, the more correct one being, I am informed, *Sak-zai*, an abbreviation of Ishak-zai) chief, and the other garrisoned by the Amir's militia, their claim to twinship may be declared null and void. Approaching Juwain closer, you see it is a rectangle, each wall being from 300 to 400 yards long, with bastions at each angle, and at intervals of about 100 yards on each face. It is built on a slight natural eminence, and its walls are of unusual height and solidity. Euan-Smith says it has never been taken. Nevertheless, some three years ago, when Abdur Rahman Khan, after his defeat of Ayub at Kandahar, sent a force to reduce and occupy Lash Juwain, the chief, perceiving that the Amir was

in earnest, and not being very keen about having his lands laid waste, and himself and adherents starved into submission, deemed discretion the better part of valour, and recognised the suzerainty of the Amir. The present garrison of Lash was a portion of the force sent to guide Sardar Mahomed Hasan Khan and his followers into the path of duty to the Amir. On the south face of the walls of Juwain I noticed a temporary entrance, and it seemed also that some of the embrasures (or whatever the use of the orifices were) were found by the inhabitants a convenient means of ingress and egress. The main entrance, however, is in the centre of the north, or rather north-western, face, flanked by two bastions; and just opposite to it, a group of a hundred or more domed dwellings give shelter to such of the inhabitants as cannot be accommodated within the walls. In this fort resides Sardar Mahomed Hasan Khan Sakzai, with his tribesmen. Around the walls a considerable area of land is, or has been lately, under cultivation, and the busy revolutions of a dozen windmills prove that there is a good deal of grain hereabouts, and a goodish number of mouths to consume it. The inhabitants of Juwain consist of Afghans of the Sak-zai or Ishak-zai section, and of Kizilbashes. The former are naturally the dominant race; but the latter are, I hear, treated with more than ordinary consideration, lest they forsake Juwain and emigrate to Persian Seistan, as many have already done at the invitation of the Amir of Kaïn. It appears that some twelve or fifteen years ago this district was visited by drought and famine, and the Amir of Kaïn then offered the starving Kizilbash population a home and the wherewithal to live in his own territory—an offer they not unnaturally availed themselves of. None of our party entered the walls of Juwain; and from the description given of its interior by the inhabitants, I have reason to believe that we should congratulate ourselves on this omission. A Kizilbash with whom I conversed, complained of the injustice of the chief towards his class; but I doubt if his statement was worthy of credit, seeing that I was informed on good authority that, for fear of a general emigration of the Kizilbash inhabitants, the chief

was careful to check even religious differences between his own tribesmen, who are Sunnis, and the Kizilbashes, who are Shi'ahs.

Some three or four miles beyond Juwain, on the right bank of the Farah Rud, stands the village of Panjdeh (some [illegible] yards south of which our camp was pitched)—a collection of mud houses and walls, with two windmills and half a dozen mulberry-trees. There is a striking absence of fruit-bearing trees between Khwaja Ali and Juwain. However, to return to the windmills. If Seistan ever produced a Don Quixote (Rustam was a great hero, but his ambition never soared to the height of windmills), he might have safely challenged to mortal or any other style of combat the windmills of his native land. Firstly, he could not have got at them; and secondly, and more to the point, he could not have got within reach of their arms, unless his Rosinante had been an unusually magnificent fencer. These windmills, whose plane of motion is horizontal, not vertical, are elevated from 10 to 15 feet above the ground, and surrounded by a proportionately high brick wall on every side. As the prevailing winds are from the north, the mills are specially adapted in construction for that wind. When the wind blows from the south, the mills have a holiday. The north side is [illegible] entirely open to give free entrance to the wind, which enters at the north-west angle, while on the east and west sides the wall is built up to [illegible] against which the [illegible] which the upper end of the [illegible] embedded firmly [illegible]. On the west [illegible] north-east angles are open, the [illegible] high wall, [illegible] but slightly [illegible] built would [illegible] the north-west angle [illegible] wind from the [illegible] provided that [illegible] days has [illegible] predominates [illegible] slightly [illegible]

best calculated to catch the full force of the wind, and when in motion causes the upper millstone to revolve on the nether, which is stationary. The fineness of the flour is regulated by means of the nether millstone, which, by the insertion or withdrawal of wooden wedges, is elevated or depressed as required. The feeder is worked by vibration imparted by the revolutions of the axle and upper millstone.

In the afternoon a party composed of Major Bax, Captain Yate, Captain Griesbach, and myself, rode down the valley of the Farah Rud to visit the fortress of Lash, distant about two miles. We were accompanied by a *sad-bashi* (captain) of the Amir's militia (Khassadar), commanding one of the two companies that form the garrison of Lash. In course of conversation with him, I ascertained that the two companies of Khassadars at Chakansur, with the two companies at Lash, formed a battalion under the command of a *sartip* (colonel), who, with two *sad-bashis*, three other officers, and 200 men, were quartered at Lash. I have reason to believe that in my last letter I overestimated the strength of the garrisons of Chakansur and Kalah-i-kang. One of the companies at Lash was composed of men from Kabul, and the other of men from Farah. They had been quartered there for three years, and did not appear to entertain any expectation of being speedily relieved. It appeared that all, or most of them, lived with their families in the upper citadel, which we were, as a matter of course, not invited to enter. The Kabuli men expressed no discontent at so long an enforced absence from their own province, and appeared to accept as indisputable the Amir's right to keep them at Lash as long as he deemed necessary. In placing a garrison of his own troops in Lash, the Amir Abdur Rahman was, no doubt, actuated by a perception of its strategical importance. A reference to the map will show that five important roads (irrespective of minor routes) converge on and meet at Lash Juwain. On the Afghan side the roads from Herat and Kandahar meet at Farah, which is connected by a good road with Juwain, and from Girishk Juwain is approachable by a practicable route along the Helmund valley. From the Persian side three roads—one from

Mashhad *viâ* Birjand; the other from Ispahan *viâ* Yezd, Kirman, and Neh; the third from Bam *viâ* Nasirabad—all meet near Lash Juwain. For a Persian invasion the Afghan frontier offers no more vulnerable point. The strength of this fortress is due partly to its natural position, and partly to artificial defences. The position is an isolated commanding point of the cliff that overhangs the right bank of the Farah Rud, protected to the east by a sheer precipice; to the north and west by a high and very steep slope, at the foot of which is a broad and deep ditch; and to the south, towards which point the cliff slopes gradually down to the river-bed, by a series of fortifications forming three successive citadels or defensive works. The two upper citadels completely command the plateau to the west and north, from which the fortress is separated by a natural hollow, 60 or 70 feet deep, and several hundred yards in breadth. The lower citadel is commanded from the plateau north-west of it, but at a distance that would render the fire of a *jazail* comparatively ineffective. It is, moreover, defended on that side by a high, strong mud wall, and a deep ditch. Its defences are now in an indifferent state of repair. Moreover, the precipice to the east is a source of danger, not protection, to the fortress, since it threatens to fall in at any moment, and bring the whole structure down with a run. It is useless against modern artillery and firearms. From its walls we obtained an excellent view of the surrounding country. Some two miles to the north-east stood the fort of Juwain—(the etymology of this word is discussed in Goldsmid's 'Eastern Persia,' vol. i. Some suppose it to be the Arabic dual form of the Persian word *jui*, an irrigation channel, from the two canals which, it is supposed, irrigated the surrounding plain)—encompassed by miles of verdant plain and miles of crumbling ruins. Here, where scores of herds and flocks might be fattening, not a single head of cattle nor a single sheep was to be seen. To the south-west, as far as the eye could see, the same verdure carpeted the plain on either bank of the Farah Rud; and on the horizon, with binoculars, we could detect very extensive ruins grouped round an eminence that, in days gone by, was

doubtless the citadel of this city of the dead. The Afghan soldiers gave this place the name of Salian; so I conclude that we were gazing on the ruins of Peshawaran described in Goldsmid's 'Eastern Persia.' To the south a bold cliff marked the end of the plateau that concealed the Hamun from our view. To the west and south-west the Kuh-i-Bandan loomed on the horizon; while to the north lay the Kuh-i-kalah-i-kah, and north-west several peaks, under which, we were told, lay Farah. During the time that we were striving to impress on the retina of our mind's eye a vivid picture of the view from Lash, Captain Griesbach was more profitably employed in taking an impression of the fortress on a chemically prepared plate of glass. I say "more profitably," because this is the first time that photography has had the chance of presenting to the general public faithful representations of the scenery, features, and most interesting sites of Seistan. It is true we have three or four photographic apparatus with the Mission, but unluckily the officers who can use them are so fully occupied with their own special duties, that they have no leisure hours to while away in the light pastime of photography. Dr Weir, the 'Times of India's' correspondent with the Mission, has come provided with a photographic apparatus, and has taken a number of photographs of interesting scenes and sites. The officers of the Survey are busy, not only from sunrise to sunset—nay, even the falling shades of night bring them but a short respite; for no sooner has daylight closed the innings of the plane-table and the prismatic compass, than the twinkle of the stars intimates that "time is up," and the innings of the theodolite commences, and the still night air is broken by solemn voices proclaiming mystic numbers and degrees that fall with comic meaninglessness on my unscientific ear. Since the unfortunate break in the chain of trigonometrical observations caused by the haziness of the atmosphere between Rudbar and Kalah-i-fath, owing to which the connection with the Indian triangulation system was unavoidably severed, a new system of triangulation, on the basis of the traverse, which has been successfully carried through, has been established. Although the scheme of carrying the

Indian system through to the Russo-Afghan frontier has thus been thwarted, the importance of the results of this survey will suffer thereby little if any diminution.

CAMP KAIN, 3d *November*.

Dr Owen, who is also a photographer, has his hands so full of medical work that he is obliged to devote such leisure moments as he can snatch from philanthropy to archæological pursuits and inquiries into local arts and manufactures, about which, I understand, Government desire to obtain some information. No sooner do we reach a camping-ground than Dr Owen is surrounded by a crowd of patients suffering from every conceivable disease, more especially diseases of the eye. The keen, almost frenzied, eagerness with which they all, young and old, crowd round the "Hakim sahib," whose magic skill, they hope and believe, can deliver them from the thraldom of an ailment or disease that threatens to embitter all the days of their lives, is a spectacle curious, and yet painful, to witness. There is no fear of pain; the one all-powerful hope of relief or cure leaves no scope to the sense of dread of bodily suffering. Men, women, and children throw themselves at his feet and clasp his knees, entreating him to employ all the resources of his skill and science in their behalf. And these crowds of blind, halt, and maimed, and of those grievously afflicted with divers diseases, are not persons whom the news of the sudden advent of the "Hakim-i-Farangi" have called from their hamlets hard by the camping-ground. No; the fame of his approach has travelled before him, and the sick come from far and near to seek a cure at his hands. To-day, for instance, a number of people from Farah were awaiting his arrival, and persons disappointed at one camp have accompanied us for one or more stages until they have attained their object. At first it appears to have been not generally known that the Mission was accompanied by a medical man for the express purpose of tending the sick of the districts we passed through. As soon, however, as Colonel Ridgeway informed the Amir's agent that such was the case, information was given to the inhabitants, and the result was

that more patients came for relief than could possibly be administered to or operated on.

In the five days from 27th to 31st October, 773 patients, according to the entries in the hospital records, obtained relief, and during the three first days of November 137 more. During this period of eight days no fewer than sixty-three major operations were performed, including an amputation of the thigh, several cases of tumour and lithotomy, and one of dropsy, and a very large number of operations on the eye. Eye-diseases, in fact, predominated, and were seemingly entirely beyond the range of skill of the native practitioners. The fact is that such diseases can only be effectually remedied by surgical operations; and the physician of the Yunani or Arabic school, however great an adept in the efficacy and application of herbs and simples, charms and talismans, is a perfect tyro in the use of the knife. In one single day 288 patients were tended; and it must be remembered that these figures, supplied from the hospital books, but inadequately represent the true number of those to whom medical aid was administered. Their number was so great, that to register their names, ages, and complaints was a sheer impossibility. The hospital tents, establishment, and equipment rarely reached camp before 1 or 2 P.M., and thus barely three hours before dark were available for attendance to the wants of hundreds of applicants. That in eight days, each of three working hours, so much was effected, is the strongest proof we can adduce of the untiring energy and devotion to their profession of Dr Owen and his assistants. It cannot be doubted that the advent of the Farangi Hakim in the western provinces of Afghanistan is an event that will be remembered and spoken of with gratitude and wonder for years to come. However, who can say that, ere many years pass over, civil dispensaries and their branches will not be established by the British Government at the headquarters of every district in Seistan? Not only male but female patients of all ages are freely brought for medical attendance. As I have before said, fear of pain and the sight of the lancet and other suggestive instruments, that give most ordinary mortals the cold shivers

(though the outward demeanour may seek to cloak the inward tremor), seemed to have no horror for the ignorant Beluch and Pathan. There they sat in a grim circle, and watched, without a wince, the incision for lithotomy, the amputation of a limb, the operation of a new pupil in an eye; and when the knife, the lancet, and the probe had done their work before their eyes, did they shrink back? Not they! It was who should first be the next subject for the operator's magic skill. They were loath to believe that only one at a time could be operated on. They dreaded that the shades of night might fall, and that the lancet should have brought to their visionless orbs no hope of a future ray of light. They were no lambs led to the slaughter, but inspired with the frenzy of a forlorn hope—not only men but women. Sometimes a man would wince under the lancet (chloroform was only administered for very serious operations), and if he persisted in flinching, and so delaying the operator in his work, he was promptly and ignominiously removed from the operating-table, with the consoling comment that he was unworthy even of being a woman. And forthwith, as an example to the rest, a woman was selected and operated on. The admirable pluck and indifference to pain exhibited by one old lady are worthy of record. After a painful operation on the eye, which she bore without a wince or murmur, the hospital assistant approached the husband and asked his wife's name, age, &c. The old lady was fifty, if she were a day. However, the husband, a venerable old greybeard, after some cogitation, hazarded the reply, "thirty years old," an assertion which was greeted with a general burst of laughter. The old lady herself was just being helped off the table, and having heard the question and answer, and the perhaps unbecoming merriment it elicited, she raised her bandaged and still sightless (though soon to regain their lost powers) orbs to our faces, and, with a good-humoured smile and chuckle, ejaculated, "You may not believe me, but blessed if I'm a day over fifteen!" It is needless to add that this sally, exhibiting, as it did, her pluck and fortitude, was greeted with much merriment and many expressions of approval.

After this brief account of Dr Owen's indefatigable efforts for the spread of the fame of British philanthropy and chirurgic skill through provinces that have hitherto been closed to European civilisation, I will endeavour to summarise the results of his archæological researches. I must premise that his arduous medical duties have seriously impeded the progress of his other scientific pursuits. Fortunately, however, he is not the only member of the Mission imbued with a taste for archæology, and the knowledge requisite to make that taste subservient and conducive to profitable results. Captains Durand and De Laessoe have succeeded in collecting a considerable number of archæological specimens; and the numismatic knowledge of Lieutenant the Hon. M. G. Talbot and Captain Griesbach has proved of great assistance to the collectors. The rapidity of the movements of the Mission has, of course, rendered independent excavation out of the question; and the fact that all the most valuable coins, signets, and other curios are promptly carried for sale to the chief centres of commerce, and that a vast number of silver coins are melted down into silver bullion (a *bunya* stated that he obtained four maunds of silver bullion from the melting of one lot that he had purchased), will account for the difficulty of obtaining locally rare and valuable coins and curios. Still there is reason to believe that those which have been collected by Dr Owen, and which, I understand, will be hereafter forwarded to the British and other museums, will throw some light on the history and artistic progress of the ancient cities that are now but symbols of the former wealth and prosperity of this wasted country. Many specimens of ancient pottery have been collected, whose excellent glaze and lightness, combined with strength, indicate that the Seistani potters of yore were no mean adepts in their art. Among coins, the commonest are those of the Ghazni and later Persian dynasties; while those of the Sassanian and Bactrian dynasties are comparatively rare. Coins of the later caliphates are not uncommon; whereas not a single coin of the first caliphate, and only one Greek coin of the post-Alexandrian monarchies, has been obtained. Not a single

gold coin has been procured. Among a number of ancient seals that have been collected, only three—two Greek and one probably Assyrian—are of great rarity and value. Not the least, indeed perhaps the most, valuable of the archæological specimens obtained here, are two bronze arrow-heads of great but at present uncertain age. Unfortunately the person who presented them for sale was unable to say where they were unearthed. Last, and not least, is an admirable specimen of old Persian brass-work, seemingly a candlestick.

With regard to modern arts and manufactures as practised in Seistan, the list is but brief, and the standard of excellence but ordinary. In the first place, it may be mentioned that the Beluch inhabitants from Rudbar to Kalah-i-fath placed so high a value on the products of their artistic skill that they persistently refused to exhibit them to the prying eye of the British intruder. Did they fear that the inquisitive Briton sought to penetrate the mysterious secret of their very commonplace productions, or was some official instigation the true secret of their reluctance? Probably the latter. Good and durable *khurjins* (saddle-bags), *kalins*, and *kalinchas* (*dhurries* or carpets, large and small), and a coarse cotton cloth, are the only local fabrics I saw. According to the statements of the inhabitants, all other articles of apparel and domestic furniture and utensils were imported. All their weapons—guns, swords, &c.—were undoubtedly manufactured elsewhere. A good deal of cotton is grown in this country, and, according to the statements of the people, is all utilised locally. I have before remarked on the absence of mills, wind or water, except at Rudbar and Juwain. The natural conclusion is that the grain is ground by handmills, as required for consumption.

CAMP GINO, *4th November.*

I must reserve for a future letter an account of the results of the labours of the geological, botanical, and natural history departments, for some details about which I am indebted to Dr Aitchison and Captain Griesbach, and will now give a brief description of our marches since we left Ibrahimabad on the 30th ultimo. The marches are—

	Miles.
Ibrahimabad to Makbara-i-Abil,	16½
Makbara-i-Abil to Takht-i-Rustam,	17
Takht-i-Rustam to Panjdeh,	15½
Panjdeh to Khushk Rud,	17
Khushk Rud to Kaïn,	13
Kaïn to Ging,	21

From Ibrahimabad to a few miles beyond Takht-i-Rustam (*i.e.*, about 36 miles) we followed the edge of the Naizar and Hamun, having on our right a low plateau of sandstone underlying conglomerate, which stretches away for some miles to the west and north of the Hamun. The Naizar is merely a broad belt of land surrounding the Hamun, which is annually flooded in the spring, and dries up gradually as the flood-waters abate and evaporate, or are absorbed in the soil. It is densely covered with reeds and bulrushes, on the feathery heads of which cattle browse. In places that are subject to but brief inundation, two kinds of grass to which cattle are partial are produced. The one is that known in Pushtu as *kabal*, and in India as *doob* or *hariyali*; and the other is called locally *kirta*, and in Beluchistan *drab*. This latter seems to flourish on any alluvial soil that obtains a fair share of water from rain or other sources. It is almost always found, together with camel-thorn, on fallow lands. Camel-thorn grows among the reeds on the edge of the Naizar; but, notwithstanding, the camels fared but indifferently on the edge of the Hamun, compared with the varied and luxurious banquet that was daily spread before them on the banks of the Helmund. The Makbara-i-Abil (tomb of Abel), which gave a name to our camp on the 30th ultimo, was actually situated on the edge of the plateau 1½ mile north-west of the camping-ground. The site of the Garden of Eden is a much-contested point, and the abode of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from that earthly Paradise is no less uncertain. I am not aware, however, that our learned divines have ever given due weight to the claims of Seistan to this honour. And who can say what spot on the face of the globe was first stained with the blood of murder? The sterile gravel-strewn plateau that overlooks the still waters

of the Hamun could scarce have been more lonesome and drear in the days when three men and one woman were the only reputed human denizens of the earth than it is now. What more weird and lonely place could Cain have selected? And here now stands the ruined tomb of Abel, marking the spot where the unbridled passions of man first dared to usurp the privilege of the Creator to take away the life that He had created.

I have already described the plain in which Juwain is situated and the site of Lash. The bed of the Farah Rud is about a quarter of a mile in breadth, and at this season of the year almost dry. The water, in fact, percolates through the shingly soil of the channel, and here and there bubbles up to the surface, and flowing away in a clear rippling stream for a few miles, again disappears beneath the porous gravel. After the stagnant water of which we had partaken on the banks of the Hamun, a draught from the pure sparkling springs in the bed of the Farah Rud was more welcome and refreshing than the choicest brands of champagne. In the cantonment life of India the value of good water ceases to be appreciated. It is only when water becomes an essential of existence that the excellence of clear, cool, spring water is valued at its proper worth. It was, therefore, not without regret that the next day we bade farewell to the Farah Rud, and struck due north across a gravelly plateau to our camp on the Khushk Rud. This latter is not the most inviting of names. The "dry river-bed" sounds decidedly unpromising; and yet it is to this very name that the Khushk Rud owes its character of a pleasant surprise. After marching some eight or nine miles across an expanse of *put* and gravel, almost entirely innocent of even a suspicion of verdure, a charmingly peaceful vale, carpeted with luxuriant grass, suddenly opens before the surprised gaze of the traveller. It is no river-bed at all. The secret of the productiveness of its soil lies in this, that natural springs of water flow immediately below the surface of the ground, as at Singbur-Chaman, between Quetta and Nushki. To obtain water, one has but to dig a pit two or three feet in depth. The water is not very inviting to look at, but when

freed from sediment by filtration, is all that can be desire
Between Khushk Rud and Kaïn we crossed the boundary-lin
between the Farah and Herat districts. Here a small detach
ment of irregular cavalry from Herat relieved the cavalry escort which had hitherto accompanied the Amir's agent, and the infantry escort furnished from the Farah command was also dismissed, and replaced by a detachment from Sabzawar. On the way from Khushk Rud to Kaïn I had a long chat with one of our guides, a Kizilbash from Juwain. Talking to one of these men is very much like knocking one's head against a hard wall—a deal of pain, albeit mental pain, with very little profit. This fellow, however, although he took great liberties with the Sháhinsháh's Persian, was both intelligent and communicative. Bellew or Euan-Smith, or both, give detailed accounts of the singing sand-drift of Imam Zaid, but I had forgotten its proximity until reminded of it by this guide. Afterwards I asked several other natives about it, but the lukewarmness of their descriptions contrasted strongly with the zeal and warmth of expression of my first narrator. He was evidently a man of a religious bent. He had but a year before prayed at the shrine of Imam Raza at Mashhad, and both his voice and gesture betokened his wonder and admiration at its golden dome. He asked me earnestly if I had visited the shrine of Imam Zaid, and regarded me compassionately when I replied in the negative. In compliance with my expressions of interest and desire to know something about it, although stern duty prevented me from going twelve miles out of the way to visit it, he described in vivid terms how the pious Mohammedan who desires through the medium of the departed Imam to humbly lay his petition at the feet of the Deity, clambers up the steep sandy slope—(this great sand-drift, lying between two ribs on the south side of the Kuh-i-kalah-i-kah, and reaching more than half-way to the summit is visible for miles around, and is a miracle in itself. How did this sand collect here? Why should it drift up here, and in no other crevice of the hill-range? I remarked a precisely similar freak of nature on the southern slope of the barren range overlooking our camp at Gazeh Chah. Does some peculiar con-

formation in these particular parts of the hill-ranges produce an eddy, a back-current, of drifting sand? For in each place the prevailing winds are northerly, not southerly.)—So long a parenthesis compels me to take up anew the broken thread of my narrative. I left the good Mohammedan, whether conscious of a sin and hopeful of absolution, or desirous of a favour and expectant of its concession, toiling up the laborious ascent—a pilgrimage meriting in itself the pardon of many past sins, and the bestowal of many future favours—to the tomb at its summit. Arrived there, he sacrifices a sheep, duly observing the ritual and ceremony prescribed for such occasions, offers up his prayer, and, not forgetful of the claims to his benevolence of the pious ascetic who tends the shrine, seats himself near the tomb, and patiently awaits the vouchsafement of a response to his petition. Should his sacrifice and prayers fail to propitiate the mediating Imam (or, as some surmise, should the coldness of his charity have chilled and hardened the heart of the attendant fakir), no response is vouchsafed. But if, on the contrary, the sacrifice be full, the prayer earnest, and the cause good, and the heart of the fakir be wisely won over to the interests of the petitioner, then, ere long, the mass of sand is shaken by vivid vibrations, and mysterious rumblings, as of distant thunder, fall on the awe-stricken ear of the favoured devotee. Thus, controverting the rule that "silence gives consent," Imam Zaid reveals to man his power. I desired to learn whether the Imam had died and been buried on this spot, but my queries found no satisfactory replies. Some said that he must of course be buried there; but as for where he died, God alone knew. The intelligent and devout guide replied that he neither died nor was buried there, but that the divine will had guided him to that spot, and had thence taken him up to heaven. I am inclined, however, to believe that some confusion existed in his mind between Imam Zaid and Imam Mahdi. The latter, the last of the twelve Imams, is believed by Mohammedans to be not dead but invisible, and his return to, or reappearance upon the earth, is as much a tenet of their faith as the millennium is that of some Christians. The hitherto unchecked career of his pseudo-represen-

tative in the Soudan has made the name of this Imam of lat[e] only too notorious. I have heard no reasonable explanatio[n] of this phenomenon of the "vocal sand."

CAMP ZEHKIN, *6th November.*

Since Khwaja Ali our marches have averaged 17 miles in length. To-day we halt here, and then march straight for Kuhsan without a halt. On the 4th we marched 21 miles from Kaïn to Ging, traversing a fine broad valley covered with excellent grazing, and studded with some half-dozen villages surrounded with extensive areas of land under cultivation. The cotton crops are just ripening, and the young wheat just appearing above the ground. The names of these villages are Langar, Kush-kak, Dustabad, Sarak, Kalah-i-kah, and Ging. The first named is inhabited solely by Saiyads, and the remainder by a mixture of Nurzais and Persians. Sarak is a very picturesque little village, lying embedded among *padda* (white poplar), mulberry, and other trees, a clear *karez* flowing through it, and the time-honoured shrine of Baba Ibdal throwing a halo of sanctity around it. Here and at Zehkin the presence of a few date-palms proves that, although the thermometer now falls below freezing-point at night, we are not yet without the limits of the Garmsir —*i.e.*, if we accept as a definition of Garmsir the climatic limits of the date-palm. In this valley, which, if not the Dasht-i-Babus itself, is on its very confines, fruit-trees abound. I saw the mulberry, apricot, fig, pomegranate, and date-palms, and opportunities of closer inspection undoubtedly would have revealed other kinds. Among vegetables not before seen in Afghanistan, I may mention a kind of bean, called locally *bagholiz*, as growing here. I was not a little surprised, too, to see here the black tents of the Iliat, as they are called in Persia—or Aimak, as I believe they are termed here. Their tents are made of coarse camel-hair. They told me they owned large herds of camels, sheep, goats, donkeys, and cattle. Their camels, however, had been taken for the service of the Mission, and God knew, they said, whether they would get any hire for them. This is their summer abode.

In winter they descend to the *dasht*, where they find good grazing; but where the *dasht* may be, I failed to ascertain. My informant, in reply to my questions on that point, waved his hand vaguely in a southerly direction. Coming from Kaïn to Ging, we passed round the north-east spur of the Kalah-i-kah range. On each side of this range, almost opposite to and at the foot of its centre, and connected by a path or road over a *kohtal* (mountain pass), or through a gorge in it, is situated a fortified village named Kalah-i-kah ("the fort of straw" it would seem to mean, but none the less built, as usual, of mud). I was rather surprised the day before at Kaïn, when a man told me that Kalah-i-kah was both on this side and that side of the range. I failed to see how it could be in two places at once, and I was not informed that it was a case of twins—in fact, Siamese twins, since they have a connecting link in common between them. The Dasht-i-Babus is a magnificent grazing-ground of great extent; it is evident that thousands of sheep and goats are annually grazed on it. It is even now supplied with water for irrigation from a large number of excellent *karezes*,[1] and this source of supply might undoubtedly be developed to any extent by the excavation of more *karezes*, and by the construction of tanks for storing the rain-water from the hills, which at present merely floods a number of channels for a few hours, and flows away unutilised.

On the march from Ging to Zehkin we crossed the bed of the Harud, a broad stony channel, dry as a chip, and thickly overgrown with tamarisk, wild lavender, and other bushes. A glance at the map would lead one to suppose that water would always be found in this channel, and yet, in reality, it is dry the greater part of the year. There is a great scarcity of firewood here. On these broad plains, so productive of good grazing, and so fertile if cultivated, not a bush or tree grows naturally. Only near the river or torrent beds are bushes of any size found. All the wood we used at Kaïn was brought from the bed of the Farah Rud. As an instance of the value

[1] A *karez* is an artificial subterranean channel, tapping a source of water-supply.

of firewood in this neighbourhood, I may mention that just before leaving the camping-ground at Kaïn, some few of us were standing round a blazing camp-fire, near which lay a large heap of wood, supplied for the use of the men, which, however, had not been consumed. We noticed a number of Kizilbashes hovering around this wood, and surmising that they were only waiting for our departure to take it, we inquired what they wanted. "We want this wood," they replied. "All right, take it," we said. No second hint was required; they fell on it with one accord, and after a brief scramble on the "devil help the hindmost" principle, they each secured and bore off a small bundle to their homes. It must have been a godsend to them. It seems strange that this fertile alluvial soil should produce nothing bigger than wormwood scrub, while the sand of the desert produces large bushes. One of the most ghastly characteristics of the waterless tract between Galachah and the Helmund was the thousands of dry leafless shrubs, some as many as 10 or 12 feet high, which covered its surface. What had first brought these skeletons of a bush into existence? Had there been at some time in the past an unprecedented fall of rain there? And yet one single deluge of rain could not give life and sustenance to these bushes till they attained a height of from 6 to 12 feet. Nothing could have been more suggestive of the complete inanition of the productive powers of the soil of this desert than these weird skeletons of withered branches; and yet our horses, during the halts, would greedily devour the sapless twigs. A famished horse, however, is not hard to please when he seeks to satisfy the cravings of an empty maw.

The march from Ging to Zehkin, 22 miles almost due north, presents no particular features of interest—a flat plain of scrub all the way, flanked on either side by rugged ranges of limestone. Five miles from Ging we crossed the Harud river, and 12 miles further a village named Kalata, inhabited by Afghans of the Alizai section. Zehkin is quite a model village, probably because it is brand-new. It appears that when Ayub Khan came down in 1881 to occupy Kandahar,

he detached a force to reduce to subjection the districts west of Farah. The people of Zehkin—all, or almost all, Persians or Tajiks—hearing of the approach of this force, withdrew with their families, herds, and flocks, and all the property they could carry away, within the Persian border. Last year, when the storm of civil war and anarchy had subsided, they returned, rebuilt their villages, and brought their lands under cultivation. Walls, houses, domes, all bear the traces of recent restoration. The village was of some size, probably had a population of 700 or 800 souls, and yet the resources of its bazaar were practically *nil.* Not even a pair of native boots or shoes, or a *poshtin*, or the warm socks usually worn by the people of Afghanistan in winter, were procurable. I was referred to Anardara for all such articles. *Nimchas* (a coat of felt with half-sleeves—the short *poshtin* with half-sleeves bears the same name), and a sleeved overcoat of coarse camel-hair, were the only apologies for warm clothing that the village could boast of; so I determined to wait for the supplies which we hope to obtain from Herat and Mashhad. Another of our great wants is good artisans. Never was a British expedition worse fitted out in this respect. A coat or pair of breeches that has been subjected to the tender mercies of our "snip," a pair of boots or article of saddlery that has been operated on by the skilful and practised hand of our cobbler, and the chair or table that has been set up on its legs again by the delicate manipulation of our carpenter, are all proofs of the eagerness with which the artisans of India vied for the honour of accompanying the Afghan Boundary Commission. In this noble spirit of emulation they found worthy rivals among that body so well known for their devotion and attachment to their masters—the bearers and *khitmutgars.* These latter, many at least, if not most of them, while with tears in their eyes they expressed regret that family ties prevented them from travelling to distant Herat and meeting face to face the Russian Bear, represented humbly that they would be only too glad to accept the sinecure post of guardian of their master's kit during his absence. T' remainder—hands crossed on breast and eye meekly hile the

impassive face concealed the activity of a brain calculating the probable net profits—replied, when asked if they would go: "Sahib parwasti karega, to be-shakk jaenge;" or, in other words, "I don't mind going for a consideration." As far as concerns the artisans, it appears that they acted on the motto, "Better a *pauli* in my own *gaon* than a rupee in Herat;" and so only those who could not even earn a *pauli* at home volunteered for the Afghan Boundary Commission. However, Sir Peter Lumsden has been asked to bring a number of good workmen of each of the trades in demand from Mashhad. He is also bringing some Persian servants from Teheran for such members of the Mission as had the forethought to ask for them. I hear rumours of our going into winter quarters on the frontier, but the place is not yet fixed, nor does it seem to be decided whether we shall be domiciled in houses or *kibitkas.* Sir Peter Lumsden having been to Sarakhs, will come down to meet us at Kuhsan, and only then will our future movements be decided. It is on the cards that we may not follow the Hari Rud to Sarakhs, but move north-east from Kuhsan to Panjdeh, near the junction of the Khushk and Murghab rivers. It is pleasant news to hear that in a climate where the thermometer falls below zero, firewood is very scarce, and that that most indispensable requisite of a hard winter will have to be obtained from the neighbourhood of Herat. I take leave to doubt this. Is it likely that the banks of the Murghab, the Hari Rud, the Tejend, the Khushk, not to mention the Mashhad river and other minor streams, are utterly destitute of firewood? It is simply incredible.[1] Why, even the desert wastes of Beluchistan positively bristled in places with splendid firewood, more especially where the water was scarcest and the sand most plentiful. After passing Anardara to-morrow, we enter the country of the Nurzais; and as the disposition of this tribe, which even among Afghans does not appear to possess an enviable reputation, is suspected to be the reverse of friendly to us, we proceed without a halt to Kuhsan. In view of this rapid marching, about 350 camels

[1] It is nevertheless a fact. Except in the neighbourhood of Kuhsan, there is an absolute scarcity of wood on the banks of these rivers.

have been provided, at Colonel Ridgeway's request, by the Amir's agent for the conveyance of followers, public and private. The 20th Panjab Infantry, with a spirit worthy of a regiment whose men are remarkable for their fine *physique*, and which, after the night march that terminated in the successful storming of Tel-el-Kebir, took part in that long, arduous forced march, the promptitude and rapidity of which was indisputably the cause of the capitulation of Cairo without a blow, have declined to avail themselves of any assistance other than that of their own sturdy limbs. I am sorry to say that the project of forming a camel corps of 100 men of the 20th Panjab Infantry at Khwaja Ali fell through, *owing to the impossibility of obtaining 100 decent riding-camels* to mount them. Now that Sardar Azad Khan's camel-men have been handsomely remunerated,—(they never made such a profitable trip in their lives before, fed like fighting-cocks, and paid like,—well, as only the British Government pays,—their most successful *chapaos* (raids) never brought them so fine a haul),—and dismissed to their homes, I need no longer conceal the fact that the camels were a terribly weedy lot—young, rebellious, untrained, full of devilry, not to mention lame and sore-backed. Yet, strange to say, I believe no one between Nushki and Khwaja Ali sustained any serious injury by a fall from a camel; whereas, of late, two broken ribs and a broken arm are among the bodily injuries for which fractious camels are responsible. In fact it must be admitted that, be the owner an Afghan or a Beluch, he is a very unpleasant customer to deal with where camels are concerned. To say nothing of the defects of temperament and *physique* in the camel, it is vexatious to be kept out of bed till midnight, when *réveillé* sounds at 4 A.M., counting over and distributing camels. The Englishman likes to sit down to his dinner with a mind at rest, and a thankful sense that the day's work is over. Not so, seemingly, the Afghan, when, after many false promises of early delivery, he brings his camels to the scratch at 10 or 11 P.M. However, after all, it is not difficult to appreciate his motive. Darkness, like charity, hides a multitude of sins. The engineering

talents of the Afghan are, moreover, not of the highest. He has no conception how strong a bridge is required for the passage of 1500 camels. He throws one narrow, weakly structure across a canal, forgetful that 1500 camels in a single line extend over 7 miles, and would consequently take at least 3½ hours to cross that bridge, even if it were possible to conduct the passage with perfect order. But the impetuous Pathan camel-driver will fight to be foremost, and the consequent snapping of *mahars* (nose-strings) is a dire spectacle for the rear-guard officer, who already foresees the shades of night fast falling ere his weary task is done. In one or two such dilemmas as this, the timely aid of a fatigue-party of the 20th Panjab Infantry with picks and shovels saved hours of delay. It did one's heart good to witness the goodwill and muscular vigour with which these men went in at a deep broad ditch, and ramped it in three or four places in no time. However, it is scarcely just to ferret out this one weak point when we have in every respect received the most hospitable treatment in the Amir's territory, and every attention and civility at the hands of the Amir's officials.

Whatever the motive, it is a fact that a body of Afghan cavalry will meet us three marches this side of Herat. It may be that the Turkomans are dangerous. I wish, however, that the Russians were as little to be feared as the Turkomans, and the lukewarmness of the Government and the indifference of the British public as both. It is too much to hope that the Persian Government will join hands with the British and Afghan. Is it likely that a Government that has for years past been but a tool in Russia's hands, would now suddenly reassert its right of independent action on behalf of its own interests? I would it were likely. I cannot but think that a railway from Quetta *viâ* Nushki and the Helmund, and through Seistan to Kirman, Yezd, and Ispahan, and thence to some port, say Alexandretta, on the Mediterranean, would, irrespective of its strategical value, do much to re-establish our waning influence at the Court of the Shah. Some will say, wait till you get permission from the Shah to make such a line. For that we must bide our time.

CAMP CHAH GAZAK, 12th November.

We are halted here to-day, and enjoying the rest well earned by our march of 38 miles yesterday from Sher Bakhsh. I do not suppose that many marches of 38 miles performed by a force numbering about 500 fighting men, 700 followers, and 1800 camels, irrespective of other means of transport, are on record; and probably not any, or at least few, have been carried out with such rapidity, regularity, and freedom from loss. It must be remembered, too, that this force had the day before covered 23 miles, and for the last six weeks has been doing an average of 16 or 17 miles a-day. This, however, combined with the excellence of the grazing at most of our camps from Khwaja Ali onward (although the length of some of our marches left the camels but scant leisure for enjoying the rich repast spread before them by nature), is probably the secret of the power of endurance and excellent condition which enabled all alike, man and beast, to undergo the fatigues of yesterday's march. A few of the cavalry horses, more especially those who, after a march of 23 miles on the 10th, were out all that night at Sher Bakhsh on picket duty (the pickets were doubled there), and coming off picket duty yesterday morning, had to march 38 miles on rear-guard duty—whose backs, in short, from 5 A.M. on the 10th to 11 P.M. on the 11th, had only for two or three short hours been relieved of the saddle and a trooper's weight, and who during that time had of course been but irregularly watered and fed—are looking somewhat sorry for themselves. The camels and mules are naturally fatigued; but after a good and thorough rest, and abundance of food and good water, they will be quite fit again for the work before them. As for the men, from the senior political officer to the humblest follower, every one looks as spry as if yesterday, and not to-day, had been a holiday. This general air of contentment and good spirits may be attributed to two things: firstly, the sense of having accomplished, and accomplished well, an arduous task; secondly, the sense of enjoyment of rest enhanced by a slight suspicion of lassitude.

Before entering into details about this m...

word or two to say about the unsatisfactoriness of the arrangements, both as to water and distance, lately made by the Amir's officials for our marches. It would be unfair to throw any blame on Kazi Saad-ud-din, as he is as much if not more a stranger in these parts than we are. The man who is responsible for the late inaccurate reports about water and distance, and for the injudicious selection of our camping-grounds, is the collector of the district, a person named Mirza Amin-ullah Khan. One of the native *attachés* summed up his value in these words: "He is barely worth the trouble of hanging; but that is the fate he deserves." On the 9th instant we started from Karez-dasht, as we understood, on a march of 17 miles, to a place named Sar-mandal, some two miles west of Aukal. The actual distance proved to be 10½ miles. About mid-day on the 9th, Colonel Ridgeway was informed that the water at Sher Bakhsh was so impregnated with saline properties as to be scarcely drinkable. Accordingly, with a great deal of trouble all the available *puckals* and *mussuks* were filled with water, and arrangements made for their conveyance to Sher Bakhsh. I will instance some of the difficulties attending this duty. Firstly, the *puckals* and *mussuks*, which had not been used since we reached Khwaja Ali, and had only been occasionally and partially soaked and greased, were quite unfit for immediate use. Not more than three hours were available for soaking them, and that proved quite insufficient. However, bad, good, or indifferent, they had to be filled. The filling commenced at 4 P.M., and it was 10 P.M. before it was finished, and the *puckals*, &c., stowed away in a room to protect them from the disastrous effects of frost. We had 11° of frost at Karez-dasht on the night of the 8th, and it also froze hard at Sar-mandal. What the fingers of the unfortunate impressed labourers suffered while dabbling for six hours in icy water, must be left to the imagination. Wood was so scarce that they had to go and cut and collect low scrub to light a fire at which to restore warmth from time to time to their benumbed hands. This neighbourhood is quite destitute of any natural vegetation larger than wormwood and camel-

thorn. Well, after all this trouble, it was found at 5 A.M. next morning that the *puckals* and *mussuks* had leaked so much in the night as to be almost empty. Only then was it ascertained from some of our camel-drivers that for five or six miles after leaving our camping-ground at Sar-mandal we would follow the course of an irrigation channel full of excellent water.

Our march on the 9th was $10\frac{1}{2}$, on the 10th, 23 miles. Why were we not encamped at the point where the road to Sher Bakhsh parts company with the water-channel above mentioned? Had this been done, we would have had two ordinary marches of 16 and 18 miles respectively. The water collected in a tank for us at Sar-mandal was a dirty, muddy mixture; that of the irrigation channel was from a clear, fresh, swiftly running stream. Furthermore, had we been told of the existence of the irrigation channel, *puckals* and *mussuks* could have been sent out five miles ahead on the evening of the 9th, soaked all night in the running stream which would not freeze, and, being filled at or even before daybreak, despatched in advance of the Mission. But this is not the hardest pill we had to swallow. When we reached Sher Bakhsh we found there a plentiful supply of good clear water, very slightly tainted with saline properties, and which we all drank readily. All this worry and trouble for nothing. What was left of the water in the *puckals* and *mussuks* was sent on at 2 A.M. on the 11th to a place said to be half-way between Sher Bakhsh and Chah Gazak. Lastly, the Afghan officials, by their inaccurate estimate of the distance of yesterday's march, upset everybody's calculations. Had it been known that the distance was 38 and not 30 miles, we would undoubtedly have started at 1 or 2 A.M. instead of 4. We had been steadily descending from Karez-dasht, and at Sher Bakhsh it did not even freeze. Also, there was moonlight the early hours of the morning, consequently all was in f of the earliest possible start, so as to reach Chah Ga nightfall. The survey has been sadly put out by pected length of this march. In fact, on its u imperative necessity for this long march, occasio

absence of water and by the reported hostility of the Alizais and Nurzais, as well as the desirability of keeping our appointment with Sir P. Lumsden at Kuhsan (on the 16th ultimo Colonel Ridgeway telegraphed to Sir Peter from Khwaja Ali, and undertook to meet him at Ghorian on the 15th instant,—we shall actually meet him at Kuhsan on the 16th: not bad in the way of punctuality), cannot be too much regretted. Just as we were approaching Herat, the traverse which Captain Gore had up to this point carried out with a rapidity almost if not quite unparalleled, was broken off. Twenty-eight and a half miles from Sher Bakhsh, the falling shades of night compelled him to abandon plane-tabling; and from that point to Chah Gazak the sole record of distance is the perambulator, which, with unflagging energy, was wheeled by the subordinates of the department from first to last. I have just learnt that Lieutenant Talbot has gone back to-day to pick up the line of the traverse at the point where it was broken off yesterday, so all will be well after all. The present survey fixes Chah Gazak at a point about six miles south-east of Pahri. Pahri, however, is reported to be 12 miles from here by the shortest road, leading to the natural conclusion that Pahri is at present incorrectly shown on the maps. It is not improbable that a similar if not greater error affects the position of Herat. We shall know, I trust by to-morrow.

I now return, however, to yesterday's march from Sher Bakhsh. The cavalry and infantry, accompanied by the mule transport, moved off punctually at 4 A.M., followed closely by the camels, some 1500 in all, including those for the conveyance of public followers. Before 4.45 P.M. the cavalry pickets were withdrawn, and the rear-guard marched off the camping-ground. The main body of the cavalry, accompanied by some of the political officers, started to march straight through. They reached Chah Gazak at 3 P.M., and the duty of arranging for beacons and guides to assist the infantry and baggage in safely reaching the camp was intrusted to Mr Merk, assisted by two native *attachés* and some sowars. The infantry, when within two or three miles of the

camp, just as the night was closing in, took a wrong turn, owing to the ignorance or stupidity of their guide, and found themselves half an hour later unable to see ten yards ahead, and hopelessly in the dark as to where the right road lay. The guide, however, still maintained he knew exactly where he was, and could conduct us safely into camp. To test the truth of this statement, he was sent on with a native officer and a guard; and sure enough, a few hundred yards ahead he brought them to the top of a hillock, and showed them the lights of the camp in the valley below. The threat which I heard enunciated repeatedly in a truculent tone by the guard, of having his eyes put out if he did not find the road quick, appears to have sharpened his wits. Doubtless the obtuse Parsiwan (we generally get Parsiwan guides, Parsiwan camels, *sarwans*, labourers, Parsiwan everything; and very little they get in return, I imagine), unfamiliar with the merciful but firm hand of British rule, fully expected that the threatened fate would be his reward for faithfully guiding a body of British troops for 38 miles. In the meantime, however, the sounds of the drum and *suronais* (bagpipes) of the 20th Panjab Infantry, and of a bugle blown at intervals, had been heard in camp, and the lighting up of the beacons was speedily followed by the arrival of two native *attachés* to show the way. The infantry reached camp about 7 P.M., marching in to the music of the *suronais* and their own cheers, as gaily as if they were just returning from a short route march. Yet these men had marched 61 miles in 37 hours, not to mention heavy guard and other duties. Major Meiklejohn avers that they are quite ready for another 38 miles to-day. In the meantime three mounted guides had been sent back to meet the baggage and put stragglers on the right road. Captain Heath informs me that he found several followers happily asleep by the roadside or in snug corners under the banks of torrent-beds, evidently prepared to make a night of it. It was very cold last night, so they may congratulate themselves on having been prevented from thus foolishly yielding to the blandishments of desire for sleep brought on by excessive fatigue. Most of the followers were mounted on camels

has more efficiently done its duty, and nothing could surpass the willingness of its chief and his subordinates to comply with every reasonable demand made at reasonable hours. If, when unreasonable demands were made at unreasonable hours, they point-blank declined to attend to them, they were but upholding their old just right to reasonable consideration. Last night neither Major Bird nor his subordinates detailed for the issue of rations retired to rest until the rear-guard came in at eleven o'clock, and every man and beast that wanted rations had got them. I must not omit to mention that the convoy of reserve stores in charge of Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din and an Afghan escort followed close on the footsteps of our rear-guard, and were all in camp before midnight. We are only too prone to scoff at the laxity of discipline and inefficiency of the Afghan troopers; but in this case he showed himself not unworthy of [illegible]. With regard to Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din, it suffices to say that, since the time that he brought [illegible] stores from [illegible] August, to the present, he has throughout shown himself to be an officer of exceptional energy, cleverness, and practical commonsense. The record of this march is [illegible] and [illegible] as showing the great mobile power of good Indian troops. If a force composed mostly of [illegible], provided with camel transport, and [illegible] sorts, [illegible] of native troops [illegible] and with mule and pony transport [illegible].

It now remains to give a brief description of the country we have traversed since then. [illegible]

avoided the main road from Farah to Kandahar, and followed a route parallel to it, and skirting the western edge of the district inhabited by them. The chief political officer of the Mission was called upon to choose between two alternatives: that of a good road and easy marches, with the chance of the inviolable character of the Mission being rudely encroached on; and that of an indifferent road and long waterless marches, and comparative security from any hostile attempt. A choice between two evils, no doubt; but the result proves that the choice fell on the lesser one.

On the 7th we marched 17 miles from Zehkin to Sangbur. Seven miles from Zehkin we entered the Anardara Pass, through which flows a considerable stream that irrigates the gardens which cover almost the entire length and breadth of the pass. About a mile from the southern entrance to the pass, in a wide bay under the precipitous mountain-range which forms its western boundary, is situated the town of Anardara. The name apparently means "the vale of the pomegranate." Whether or not that particular fruit abounds there, I cannot say; but this I can say, that in few places in Persia or Afghanistan have I seen such a large area of soil devoted almost exclusively to the cultivation of fruit-trees. I could not but regret that the lateness of the season prevented us forming an opinion of the merits of the fruits of Anardara. The absence of blossom, and, in most cases, of leaves on the trees, made it difficult to recognise the species. The familiar *shah-tut* (mulberry) was there in abundance, but not a trace of a vineyard. At Zehkin we heard a good deal about some ancient inscriptions and remains of interest to be seen in the town of Anardara. Those who visited them, however, considered the inscriptions, which were in Persian and Arabic, to be not more than 200 or 300 years old. There is one characteristic of that sweet vale, however, which, for some time to come at least, will make us all shiver at the mere mention of Anardara, and that is the bitter north-west wind which, blowing down its narrow gorge with a force which may be represented in the terms (velocity of wind × contraction of channel), chilled us to the very marrow, and pinched

our features into scarce recognisable forms. Oblivious of its walled orchards, at other times suggestive of luscious golden apricots and red-cheeked downy peaches, dark-purple plums veiled in a rich bloom, and white-heart cherries, whose blending tints put the fairest Saxon complexion to the blush, not to add apples, pears, and quinces; regardless of the grandeur of the rugged frowning cliffs that tower aloft on either side, almost cursing the pure clear streamlet beneath our horses' feet for looking so cruelly and ruthlessly cold,—we press blindly forward, animated but by one hope, that of escaping from this gorge and its bitter biting blasts. We envy but one thing, and that is the snug position of the densely packed town, with its loopholed walls, cosily ensconced in a bay where the wind careers harmlessly past it. Yes; the founder of this settlement knew what he was about. Possibly he built his first village in the middle of the valley: if he did, I'll guarantee that the north-west wind very soon taught him the value of the bay under the western mountain-side, which, one would think, nature had created expressly for the purpose of rendering a spot so fertile and yet so martyrised by violent winds, habitable by man. The windmills here, as well as those at Zehkin, prove the general prevalence of the north-west wind, of which the structure of the windmills of Juwain and Panjdeh were an almost infallible indication. The only difference in construction between the mills of Anardara and those of Juwain consisted in this, that the northern or back wall was at right angles, and not at an oblique angle (as I remarked in a recent letter), and that the opening at the north-east angle was either entirely built up, or was replaced in some cases by a narrow orifice in the centre of the northern wall. In all cases, the opening at the north-west corner admitted the wind that set the sails in motion. The inhabitants of Anardara are mostly Tajiks or Parsiwans, with a small admixture of Nurzais and Sakzais. The *kalantar*, or headman, is also, I was informed, a Tajik. Anardara is spoken of in all the country round as a place of some commercial importance. I met several *commis voyageurs* from this town at Panjdeh, near Juwain. One of them assured me that Anardara, al-

though a cold place, was rarely troubled by winds. He must have been an incorrigible *farceur;* and yet I did not catch a merry twinkle in his eye, nor did I see him wink at his brother journeymen. Certainly the natives of the district we have traversed since we left Quetta, if they excel in no other art, trade, profession, or science, are absolutely unequalled in the noble "art of lying." I trust that the officers of the Intelligence Department are duly careful to season all the statements and information they cull in this neighbourhood with a liberal infusion of salt. According to my experience, the best receipts for compounding the essence of truth from the material at our disposal in these parts, is to collect as much of this material as possible from different sources, amalgamate it, and then accept the mean result as the nearest approach to truth. My unimpeachably veracious informant about the Anardara winds, or rather absence of winds, stated that the garrison of Lash consisted of 30 Afghan militiamen. The actual strength is 200.

There is a small fort at Sangbur and a *karez.* The route from Sangbur to Karez-dasht (23 miles) traverses a tract perfectly innocent of cultivation. Seven miles from Sangbur the road, leaving an old fort perched in a strong position on an isolated mound to the west, enters a defile some ten or twelve miles in length. In this defile was visible the line of an old *karez* called, "Karez-i-khiyar-zar"—*Anglicè,* "Cucumber-garden-beck." (I hope my readers know the good old Yorkshire word "beck." The Persian original has a smooth euphony that defies imitation in an English translation.) This *karez* is now choked up except in two pits, whence travellers and caravans still obtain an abundant supply of water. The luxuriant growth of green rushes and grasses in each of the old choked-up pits shows that the water is still trickling along beneath the soil. Some day when prosperity returns to Western Afghanistan—*i.e.,* when a British (or Russian ?) garrison occupies Herat, and a British railway opens up the commercial and agricultural resources of this country—this *karez* will once more be opened up, and the cucumber-beds that are now but a name will once more be a reality. This defile is

very rich in excellent firewood. There is an old Persian verse which runs thus, "Balg o bulut, khinjak o tut," representing the four favourite kinds of firewood in use in Persia. *Balg* is a low thorny shrub with a red berry, commonly seen in this country, especially in dry torrent-beds. *Khinjak* is the *Pistachio cabulica*, and is common all over Afghanistan and Persia in mountainous districts. *Tut* is the common mulberry-tree. *Balg* and *khinjak* abound in this defile: so we at least have the wherewithal to bid defiance to the nightly frosts. At Zehkin we had one degree of frost, at Sangbur several degrees, and at Karez-dasht we reached the maximum of eleven degrees. When the cavalry reached Sar-mandal, near Aukal, at 9 A.M. on the 9th instant, they found the tank for watering animals covered with a thick coat of ice. Since then, we have been descending as rapidly as we before ascended from Ging to the top of the watershed, three or four miles south of Karez-dasht, and for the last two nights the thermometer has not recorded a fall to freezing-point. The elevation of the top of the watershed above referred to is about 3500 feet, whereas Herat is about 1000 feet lower.

From the Dasht-i-Babus onwards we have daily seen, pitched near the walls of a village or perched away on the slopes at the foot of some hill-range, the black tents of those pastoral nomads who everywhere in Persia are termed "Iliat," and hereabouts "Aimak." These two terms indicate the occupation and mode of life, not the tribe or race, of these roving shepherds. The latter name is apt to lead to the supposition that these nomads are members of the Chahar Aimaks (Jamshidis, Firuzkuhis, Taimanis, Hazaras) near Herat; but it is not so. On the contrary, many of them are Afghans of the Nurzai and Alizai tribes, while others are Parsiwans. They own large flocks and herds, besides camels and donkeys, and occasionally till the soil. Around the old fort at Karez-dasht were a number of fields of young wheat springing up, the result of the agricultural labours of the nomads of the valley. Now, having seen the wheat spring up, they all, except one or two families left behind to tend and irrigate the

p, migrate southward with their flocks and herds to graze a warmer clime, returning in spring in time to gather in e harvest. In the hottest part of the summer these nomads, well as many Pathans, Beluchis, and Brahuis, inhabiting illages further south, migrate into the hills, and find grazing or their sheep and goats among the rugged rocks when the lains below are dry and scorched. This country, at least to he European eye, has not been endowed with any beauty or variety of form, or clothed in those external attributes, such as forests and woods, fair green fields and purple heaths, which nature has been pleased to bestow on more favoured climes; but, after all, may not taste in landscape, as well as in other forms of beauty, be rather regulated by the scenery to which we are habituated? Who knows but that the Afghan prefers his limestone and granite mountain-ranges and his brown scrubby native heath to the magnificent verdure and fertile plains of Europe? These rugged ranges in the ruddy glow that precedes sunrise are singularly picturesque. It is a sight worth seeing, those dark jagged peaks and indented ridges lit up in the semi-darkness of early dawn by a marvellous golden red flush, in which every nook and cranny, every spur and ridge, every gorge and gully, is thrown into relief. However, I really cannot say that these masses of trap-rock and lime-stone have a single attractive feature at other times.

Aukal, near which we encamped on the 9th, is a large village some 20 miles west of Sabzawar. Its valley is said to be watered from the Adraskan river, which flows past Sabzawar. Around the village a large area is under cultivation, and the valley between it and Sabzawar is also studded with villages; and where there are villages, there also will be found cultivated lands. But between Aukal and Chah Gazak, a distance of 61 miles, I did not see one square foot of soil under cultivation, nor do I recollect seeing a single nomad's tent. The fact is, there is no water throughout this tract except at Sher Bakhsh, where the water, slightly saline, issues naturally from the soil. On the side of a mound near this water I remarked a few graves, and I think the top of the mound was crowned by a *ziarat* (Mohammedan shrine), but

without a fakir. In fact, no living being seems to haunt this wilderness, nor did we meet any travellers. By the by we did see water at one place some seven or eight miles south-west of Chah Gazak. Some shallow pits had been dug in the bed of a torrent, and water had collected therein. As my horse refused to touch it after a 30-mile march, it must have been somewhat unpalatable. This tract of 61 miles in length consists of a series of undulating ranges of hillocks, intersected by several plains of small extent. In the distance to the north or north-west stood up the Du-shakh range, so called from a double peak near its centre. At Chah Gazak, the two peaks as seen from the east appear but as one. At Ghorian again we shall see both. At Chah Gazak there is a small fort, a *karez*, and a neglected garden. I saw no sign of cultivation. The water is good. It is probably merely an outpost held by Afghan irregulars. There we first tasted the fruits of Herat—apples, melons, grapes, pomegranates, pears, and quinces. The two first were excellent, as also the grapes, which, however, do not improve by keeping. These grapes were probably cut from the vine two months ago. They eat, however, better than they look. The skins of most have from keeping turned of a brownish colour, but the flavour has not much deteriorated. Other kinds, again, look as fresh as if they had just been cut from the vine. The apples are said to come from Mashhad.

To-morrow we march to Pahra, and on the 14th to Zindajan, some 30 miles west of Herat, where Sardar Mahomed Sarwar Khan, Naib-ul-hukuma, Governor of Herat, meets us. However, of this, and of all we see of Herat, I will write hereafter.

CAMP RAUZANAK, NEAR GHORIAN, 16*th November*.

It seems hard to pass near Herat, and to be constrained to content one's self with a view of its walls, but faintly looming through the ill-timed veil of mist that, on the 13th and 14th instant, the only days when we were within eyeshot of the city, settled on the face of the valley, and effectually obscured it from our sight. On the morning of the 13th we moved on Pahra, following a route whose circuitousness would certainly

have made the ancient Roman, with his predilections in favour of short cuts over hill and dale, open his eyes in wonder at the obtuseness of a race that deems two sides of a triangle less than the third. It is true that the third side of the triangle was reported to be a defile difficult, if not impassable, for camels. The road *viâ* this defile was not more than 10 or 11 miles in length, Pahra being situated about north by west from Chah Gazak. The road we actually took was measured 17½ miles by the survey. It first ran slightly north of west for about nine miles, then struck northward for a couple of miles, and finally made off north-eastward to Pahra. Shortly after leaving camp I went off to a hill some four miles north-west of Chah Gazak, to see if I could get a sight of the city and valley of Herat. Arrived at the summit, I saw a party of mounted Afghans with several camels, just below me, taking the short cut to Pahra. It was this sight which led me to surmise that the dance of 17½ miles which we were being led was somewhat unnecessary. From this hill I was prevented from seeing the city of Herat itself by a somewhat higher range intervening. I obtained, however, an excellent view of the whole valley west of the city, to a point where an outlying spur of the Du-shakh range (called Kuh-i-kuftar Khan), running from south-west to north-east, abuts on the Hari Rud, and severs the Herat valley proper from the valley of Ghorian and Kuhsan. South and east I looked over the broad undulating plain traversed by several low ranges of hills, the scene of our 38-mile march, on the 11th, from Sher Bakhsh to Chah Gazak. Eastward the double peak of the Kuh-i-du-shakh (the two-horn range) appeared as but one; whereas from the south at Sher Bakhsh, or from the north at Zindajan and Rauzanak, the two peaks are distinctly visible. Failing to get a glimpse of Herat itself, I made for another hill, some two or three miles to the west, where I found Captain Gore with a survey-party busily engaged in putting the prominent points of the valley of Herat and the surrounding ranges on paper. With the assistance of an unusually intelligent and willing guide, and a pair of binoculars, we succeeded in discerning through the already thickening mist the south

and west walls of the city. The south-west angle was discernible with tolerable clearness, and an edifice, which afterwards proved to be the citadel, was dimly distinguishable. All else was lost in a fog. The eastern end of the valley, excepting the distant ranges that hem it in, was wrapped in a cloud of white vapour; but the centre, lying south of the city, which is situated at the foot of the range bounding the valley to the north, with its almost countless villages, forts, and gardens (I cannot add fields, because, although actually there, they were at this season, when the crops are either only just sown or just peering above the soil, invisible at a distance), bore testimony to its fertility, and to the degree of prosperity it might attain under a stable and peaceful government. The absence of green crops and the bareness of the trees robbed the landscape at our feet of that luxuriance of verdure which has been the theme of the pen of some previous European travellers. Still, any one who has seen the valley of the Arghandab and the vicinity of Kandahar in spring-time, when the *rabi* (spring) crops are ripening, and the orchards are a mass of variegated blossom and budding leaves, can realise what the valley of Herat must be at the same season. Its length may be some 50 miles, and its breadth about 20, watered throughout by the Hari Rud. The purity and excellence of the water of that river have drawn words of praise from earlier visitors; and as I first drank a deep draught from it towards the close of a thirsty march of 30 miles, I am prepared to fully endorse, if not to enhance, their encomiums. The western end of the valley is much more sparsely inhabited and cultivated than the centre—not, however, from any scarcity of water for irrigation. On the contrary, as one journeys westward to Zindajan, Ghorian, and Rauzanak, one crosses a series of canals of greater or less width, which, in the aggregate, drain off a very large body of water from the still strong-flowing stream of the Hari Rud. In addition to the inhabitants of villages, a considerable population dwell in *gizhdis*, as the black tents used by the pastoral nomads of Persia and Afghanistan are termed. These nomads are popularly spoken of as "the people with their houses on

heir backs," or "they who dwell in black abodes." These *izhdis* one sees in every valley around Herat, and in the valley of Herat itself their number is legion. The tent is constructed of a coarse blanketing made of camel or goats' hair, supported on rough-cut stakes some six feet in height. The chinks at the corners and the open spaces between the bottom of the blanketing and the ground are closed, at least in this chilly weather, by bags of grain and other articles of food-supply used by the occupants.

The village of Pahra, which lies about twenty miles south-west of Herat, is a curiosity of its kind. It is a perfect little beehive. On a low spur to the north of it stands the Ziarat-i-Mulla Alijah, and from this point one can look down into this quadrangular nest of domes. Imagine several hundreds of small low mud domes, closely girt around by four solid walls of mud or mud brick. That narrow thoroughfares must exist is a certainty, but so narrow are they that the eye cannot detect their whereabouts. The inhabitants, I was informed, were a mixture of Populzais, Barukzais, Taimanis, Tahuris, and Tajiks. The entire quadrangular area of domes appeared to be composed of a number of smaller quadrangles of domes; and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that one or more of these lesser quadrangles or quarters would be assigned to the several tribes and races of which the population is composed. Around this village extends an area of some five or six square miles under cultivation. In some parts the young crops were just appearing, in others the plough was busily at work. Water for irrigation is obtained from one or more *karezes*, as well as from a stream flowing towards the Hari Rud. The channel of this stream was in some places quite dry, the water percolating clandestinely beneath the gravelly bed, only to reseek daylight at some point lower down. The numerous settlements of nomads in this neighbourhood are sufficient evidence of the excellence of the grazing. From Pahra the Mission marched on the 14th in a north-westerly direction through the eastern offshoots of the Du-shakh range to Zindajan, a distance of $21\frac{1}{4}$ miles. As Colonel Ridgeway had decided to halt on the 15th at Zindajan, it was thought pos-

sible that the Governor of Herat would consent to a party of officers visiting the city. It would appear, however, that he did not consider such a visit advisable, perhaps owing to the rumoured unfriendliness of the Kabuli regiments, and also, I hear, of a Kandahari regiment stationed there.[1]

[1] It must rest a matter of opinion how far the Afghan officials have made an exaggerated use of the supposed fanaticism of certain tribes and troops with a view to circumscribing, as far as possible, the knowledge of the country acquired by the Mission during its passage through it, and also with a view to exercising as complete a control as possible over its movements. Any independence of action aimed at by Colonel Ridgeway would, no doubt, have drawn forth the polite intimation that the Amir's representatives regret they cannot answer for the security of the Mission if the proposed course be followed. In fact we have been hitherto almost entirely under Afghan guidance, and I think I may add surveillance. I hear frequent complaints on the part of the Intelligence Department about the difficulties they have to encounter in the pursuit of topographical information; and yet, after all, they have effected no mean result. They have opened up a military route, passable for all arms, from Khwaja Ali to Herat, by which the flank of an enemy advancing on Kandahar *viâ* Farah can be most effectively operated on; and they have gained much new information, and confirmed or corrected the reports of previous travellers. The preliminary orders of the Government of India should have prepared them for no great liberty of action. I remark that the burden and heat of the day imposed on the shoulders of the people of Western Afghanistan by our passage through it, falls mainly on the subject Parsiwan, not on the dominant Afghan. An excellent instance of the casual way in which our so-called guides are provided occurred this morning. Just as I was leaving camp, I came across an officer of the Intelligence Department regarding with an eye of indignation two dirty unshorn *namad*-clad objects. (*Namad* is coarse, thick felt, much used by the lower classes as warm clothing.) These, I found, were guides, and both averred they were never at Rauzanak in their lives before; and as for Zangi-sowar or Kuhsan, they were but names and not realities to them. One of them recounted to me thus briefly the story of "how he came to be a guide": "I am resident of a *ziarat* near Chah Gazak. When the news of the advent of the Mission of the illustrious English Government arrived, I was ordered to arrange for the supplies" (*godam* — is this a corruption of the familiar British expletive with a double *d*, or of the well-known Anglo-Indian word "godown"?). "I did so; and now for four days have I been following the Afghan Commissioner, begging for a receipt for what I supplied. Last night I was told that if I acted as a guide to Kuhsan I would then get my receipt. Never before in my life was I at Rauzanak or at Kuhsan; but I must have my receipt." Zeal for the service to which he belongs impelled the officer of the Intelligence branch to reject that guide, and seek to tempt with Indian silver some villagers to take a trudge to Kuhsan. Several volunteers at two rupees were found; but their noses were put out of joint by a more than usually needy customer who, with a leery grin of satisfaction on his pinched countenance, agreed to go for one rupee. However, he never got his rupee; for, to the ow-

Furthermore, the distance of Zindajan from Herat, close on 30 miles, made such a visit practicable only for those who had a good steed at their disposal, and who did not shrink from the risk of overtaxing the strength of horses that had already been severely tried by a succession of exceptionally long marches. As a letter had been received from Sir Peter Lumsden, who, after visiting Sarakhs and Pul-i-Khatun, is now *en route* for Kuhsan, stating that he would not reach the last-named place before the 19th instant, we might perhaps have halted two days at Zindajan, and thus afforded the Naib-ul-hukuma an opportunity of evincing the friendly and hospitable feelings he entertains towards the Mission, which has marched in all haste nearly 900 miles to maintain the integrity of the frontier of his country. Nothing, I feel sure, would have given more pleasure to all the members of the Mission than to have ridden into Herat on the 15th, seen all that could be seen in a brief space of time, availed themselves for the night of the hospitality of our Afghan allies, and returned to Zindajan on the 16th. Such an agreeable programme, however, was not destined, at least for the present, to be recorded among the annals of the Mission; and therefore I do not regret having ridden somewhat out of my way on the 14th to see what I might see. At this season the early morn is the only time when a distant view is practicable. As the day advances, the misty vapours and smoke settle thicker and thicker in the valleys, and the range of vision becomes very limited. From an eminence in the Herat valley, however, some 7 miles north-east of Pahra, and 12 to 15 miles south-west from Herat, I got a much better view of the city than I had obtained on the previous day. The citadel was distinctly visible, as were also the imposing *minars* (six or seven in number) and buildings of the Minar-i-Musalla, and the Ziarat-i-Khwaja Abdullah Ansari on the slope to the north of the city. Herat and its neighbourhood have been so thoroughly described by previous travellers—by Englishmen, indeed, who have been long resident there, as Pottinger,

ledge, his noble fellow-villagers threatened to denounce him. So the man in search of a receipt had to go after all.

D'Arcy Todd, Sanders, and others—that any attempt at description from one who has not been within 12 miles of it, and depends for his information on the statements of natives, seems superfluous. However, I believe the generality of the public are not given to reading the works of these travellers of the last generation, so what I have learned of the present condition of the city may still be news to some.

Herat, in its general outline, closely resembles Kandahar; or rather the simile should be reversed, for I have little doubt that Ahmed Shah Abdali, the first monarch of the Saddozai family, took Herat as his pattern when he founded Kandahar about 1750 A.D. The city is almost a square, each of its walls being somewhat over three-quarters of a mile in length, whereas Kandahar is more of an oblong shape. Herat has five gates, of which one is on the northern side, to the west of the new citadel. The remaining four gates are situated at or near the centre of the four faces, and from each of them a broad street leads to the Chahar-su, which is, both topographically and commercially, the heart of the city. Chahar-su is the exact equivalent of our word "cross-roads," except that it is, to the best of my knowledge, only or generally applied to the point in the centre of a city where four main streets meet under a large dome in which are situated the best shops, and from which the foci of trade radiate, and to which commercial interests converge. It is at once the Bourse and the Burlington Arcade of the Afghan provincial capital, with this exception, that the type of the frenzied French *financier* who frequents the former, and of the matchless "masher" and somewhat questionable *habituée* of the latter, are replaced by the varied types of the Afghan, Turkoman, Uzbek, Hazara, and Tajik, and the sombre blue of the chaste and impenetrable *burka*.[1] However, let us wend our way back from the Chahar-su to the gates. The northern gate is termed Darwaza-i-Kutichak; the western, Darwaza-i-Irak; the southern, Darwaza-i-Kandahar; and the eastern, Darwaza-i-Khushk. Each gate is flanked by two bastions, and the moat which encircles the city is bridged at each of the four gates by a

[1] *Burka* is the veil worn by women in Persia and Afghanistan.

wooden drawbridge, which is raised and lowered by mechanical appliances worked from inside the walls. The walls, which are some 25 to 30 feet high, and each face of which is furnished with 20 to 25 bastions (on the southern face, on which the morning sun was shining, we could see each bastion, as well as the position of the gate, distinctly), are built on the top of an artificial embankment (locally termed *khakriz*), some 40 or 50 feet high. On the exterior slope of this embankment two lines of shelter-trenches, one above the other, are carried all round the city, except where the gates are, and at the foot of the embankment runs the broad moat. From a strikingly neat and lucid plan of the city drawn for me by a guide—who, if a stranger to the curriculum of a school of art, had at least a natural perception of the elements of geometrical drawing, unfettered by the meretricious aids of the compass and the ruler—it would appear that the old citadel (Ark-i-kuhna) is situated on a slight eminence in the north-west quarter, and that the Ark-i-nau, or new citadel, lies between it and the north wall. The old citadel is surrounded by a moat. The garrison is said to consist of two Kabuli and two Herati cavalry, two Kabuli and two Herati infantry regular regiments; and some twenty guns of varied calibres are mounted on its walls, besides numberless others lying dismounted on the ramparts. Twenty guns to defend $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles of wall! The population of such a city is, of course, a strange medley. In addition to the races before named, I may add that several hundred Hindus, mostly bankers, pawnbrokers, and haberdashers, are located here, as well as some Armenians, and that the Jews have a quarter of their own. The two last-named races, in addition to other occupations, monopolise the manufacture of wines and the distillation of ardent spirits. The Prophet decreed, "Thou shalt not taste wine or intoxicating liquid;" but the letter of the law and the unwritten social law of the Mohammedan of the nineteenth century, inspired by a wider tolerance for the weakness of human nature, hath thus laid down: "Thou shalt not brew thy own liquor; but the accursed Jew, the heathen idolater, and the Christian Kafir may brew it for thee. Thou



spotted a stray man, or horse, or camel, a flock of sheep and goats, or a group of *gizhdis.* And these proved to be Alizais—those fanatics thirsting for our blood. When we parted they displayed more cordiality than any native I have accosted from Khwaja Ali to Rauzanak. In reply to a question whether any stranger was allowed to enter Herat, they replied that foreigners were not allowed within the gates without a permit from the Governor. When distant some three or four miles from the Hari Rud and the western end of the valley, I turned to the west over a somewhat steep and difficult pass, evidently but little frequented, into the Ghorian valley. Having crossed the pass, I moved south to join the main road from Herat to Zindajan, and then turning west again, and more or less following the left bank of the river for some ten miles, finally reached our camp situated north-west of the last-named village. The left bank of the river was entirely barren and uninhabited, but on the right bank I noticed several villages and forts. Zindajan consists of a very large area of walled gardens and fields, but I doubt if the population is more than 300 or 400. The pigeon-towers are its most noticeable feature, but I saw no domesticated pigeons. In the neighbourhood of Ispahan an enormous number of domesticated pigeons are kept by the landowners, the high towers constructed for their inhabitance attracting the attention by their curious style and shape. There the main object is the collection of their droppings, which are highly prized as the best manure for melons. Here the object is possibly the same. Certainly the melons, which, in addition to grapes, pears, quinces, apples, pomegranates, pistachio-nuts, almonds and raisins, and the most seductive sweetmeats, the Governor of Herat has provided to adorn our mess-table and tempt our palates, are, after the fruits of India (I beg to make an exception in favour of mangoes and green-figs), truly ambrosial food. I have tasted better melons, though, at Kandahar.

CHAPTER V.

FROM HERAT TO KUHSAN.

KUHSAN, 18*th November*.

DURING the last four days we have had a foretaste of the winter that awaits us farther north. Hard frost at night one can endure if tempered by a few hours of genial sunshine in the day; but a bitter blast, blowing night and day, numbing hands and feet on the march, and piercing the thickest pile of blankets in the hours of rest, is not more than human nature can stand, for we have all stood it; but, if we had been given any option in the matter, we would have preferred not being put to the test. Circumstances, moreover, combined to render our marches on the 16th and 17th more than usually trying, as I will mention hereafter. However, here we are at our goal; and though the north-west wind—the same wind that we found so unpleasant between Ibrahimabad and Lash Juwain and at Anardara—shows no signs of slackening the vigour of its assault; still, as we are to be stationary some days, we can, by intrenching our tents, strengthening the defences of our doorways, and keeping up a steady fire of embers within, bid defiance to Boreas. Fold back a portion of the carpet of your tent, dig a little hole, fill it with hot embers, to be renewed from time to time, put your writing-table and chair over it, draw on a pair of *poshtin* or fox-skin overalls, covering boots and trousers up to the knee, and then you can sit and write all day, and all night too if you like. Your shivering pen will not then trace more than usually

illegible characters on the paper, nor will an insidious numbness creep slowly upward from toe to knee.

Who is the Jonas who brought us this dirty weather?—no less a personage, it would seem, than Sardar Mahomed Sarwar Khan, Naib-ul-hukuma, Governor of Herat. And yet his genial countenance should rather dispel than compel clouds, should rather blunt than sharpen the edge of a cutting northwest wind. On the morning of the 14th he came out two miles from Zindajan with an escort of cavalry and infantry to meet Colonel Ridgeway, who, in view of this meeting, was attended on this march by all the political officers and a strong cavalry escort. In fact, as the main body of the detachment 11th Bengal Lancers with three British officers were with him, they, to all intents and purposes, though not by order, acted as his escort. On arriving in camp, Colonel Ridgeway and all the officers accompanying him were conducted to the Governor's tent, and, as customary, provided with some light refreshment in the shape of tea, fruits, and sweetmeats, after which they retired to their own camp. It was arranged that the Governor of Herat and Kazi Saad-ud-din should pay a formal visit to Colonel Ridgeway the same evening. However, the late arrival of the baggage with the *shamianah,* and the cloudy chilliness of the afternoon, combined to postpone this ceremony until the following day. Since the afternoon of the 14th, when this unfavourable change in the weather set in, we have had occasional falls of rain, sleet, and hail, and hard frost every night. The visit of the Afghan officials was fixed for 2 P.M. on the 15th, and the return visit for 3 P.M. on the same day. Both for the reception and the return of this visit, Colonel Ridgeway was attended by all the officers, native *attachés,* and native officers of the Mission. What a transformation! The figures which had been hitherto clad in sombre *khaki* (dust-coloured cloth)—the dark-blue frock of the 11th Bengal Lancers with its red *kamarband* and the picturesque *loongi* had been almost our only attempt at colour—suddenly bloomed out in every variety of hue and tint. The more sombre colours worn by the political officers, the 11th Bengal Lancers, the officers of the Engineers and army staff,

was relieved by the red tunic of the 7th Bengal Lancers, the drab of the 20th Panjab Infantry, the red and green of the Beluchi, and the green and black velvets and broadcloths, profusely adorned with gold lace, affected by some of the native *attachés.* Breasts which had hitherto scorned decorations, suddenly appeared adorned with a veritable blaze of medals and orders; and among these none more conspicuous than Subadar-Major Mowla Dad, of the 20th Panjab Infantry, and Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din, whom to see was to envy. I have not forgotten the tenth commandment, but the flesh will be weak at times. The diversion of studying and criticising each other's splendour helped to make us forget the chilly wind, and to pass time until the sounds of a drum and *suronais* told us the guard of honour of the 20th Panjab Infantry was approaching, and then our criticisms were diverted to them. I can safely say that their fine *physique* and martial bearing drew forth naught but looks of approval and words of praise from the onlookers. On most of their breasts reposed the Afghan, Egyptian, and Frontier medals. Our Afghan visitors, who were escorted from their own camp to ours by three native *attachés,* arrived punctually,—were met by Mr Merk as they alighted from their horses, and by Colonel Ridgeway at the door of the *shamianah,* and conducted by him to their seats —the Governor of Herat on the right, and the Afghan Commissioner on the left. They were unattended by any suite. After a brief space of time devoted to conversation, they took their leave. They were reconducted to their tents with the same ceremony as attended their arrival. After a brief interval, some members of the Afghan suite, with a small escort of Lancers (part of a regular cavalry regiment), arrived to conduct Colonel Ridgeway and his suite to the Afghan camp, where we were received at the door of the durbar tent by the Governor and Commissioner. Colonel Ridgeway introduced each individual, British and native officer, to the Governor. After some conversation, Colonel Ridgeway took leave of the Governor, and went off with the Commissioner to inspect a *kibitka.* It is proposed to house the Mission in *kibitkas* for the winter. What was shown us was a framework of light

lattice-work covered with felt. It was circular, with a diameter of 10 to 12 feet, and perpendicular sides rising six feet, from which height the roof slopes upward to a point, leaving at the apex a small aperture for the escape of smoke. This aperture in bad weather is closed by a felt cap. The roof is one solid piece of felt, or composed of several pieces sewn firmly together. The sides are likewise one single piece, the door being the only opening. The edges of the roof-piece lap a few inches over the sides. It can be taken to pieces, folded and packed, and unpacked and erected in no time. Such a one as we saw requires no stay-ropes except in the roughest weather. The points of the lattice-work are buried in the ground some eight or nine inches. This lattice-work folds up into a small compass, exactly like those ornamental wooden expanding flower-pot holders, or silver expanding napkin-rings. Undoubtedly a *kibitka* well made and finished is a far snugger, if not more portable abode, than the best tent ever turned out at Fatehgarh or Jubbulpore.

Having seen a *kibitka*, we all returned to camp, not sorry to escape from the cold and our best toggery. Next morning we marched for Rauzanak, the hour of departure being, owing to the cold, postponed till 8 A.M. Away to our right (north) were visible in the distance the snow-covered summits of the high range between us and Badkis, commonly and erroneously known as the Paropamisus. This march, although only 17¼ miles in length, was productive of more difficulties than many much longer ones, owing to the intricate nature of the country. Within 200 yards of camp all our camels had to cross a deepish muddy ditch, the only bridge being a narrow steep structure of brick, which proved a greater obstacle to laden camels than even slimy mud. Not a few camels came to grief. A few miles farther another broad and deep canal had to be crossed by a single bridge, admitting of the passage of only one camel at a time. Then came the river (Hari Rud); and last, not least, within half a mile of Rauzanak another ditch, more muddy, and with more precipitous banks than the first one, had to be crossed. Dire was the wailing and lamentation among camel-men and camels, escort and followers.

The shades of night fell, and still many a camel was on the wrong side of that ditch. The work of crossing was continued by the light of lanterns, and not till 7 P.M. did the rear-guard enter camp. *Experientia docet.* The next morning we found the water in this irrigation channel had been turned off, and a broad road across it constructed by filling in the ditch with dry soil. So we filed out of camp in very different style from that in which we entered it. At the end of the long march of 24 miles from Rauzanak to Kuhsan, we had again to cross a deep canal to reach a camping-ground. The Afghan officials had, however, constructed two fairly good and stout bridges across this canal, and as the road itself had presented no obstacles, all the baggage was seen safe over these bridges and into camp before dark. Rauzanak is situated on the right bank of the river, some seven miles north of Ghorian, which lies on the left bank, and near which we did not pass.

At Zindajan the escort of the Governor of Herat was encamped several miles away from us. On the 14th, however, the Governor very courteously expressed a wish that Colonel Ridgeway would review his escort, and a spot on the line of march from Zindajan to Rauzanak was fixed on for that purpose. The review came off about 10 A.M. The Afghan troops were drawn up in line to receive Colonel Ridgeway, and on his approach a salute of thirteen guns was fired. The troops then marched past in the following order: Mule-battery, infantry, regular cavalry, and irregular cavalry. The mule-battery consisted of four guns, seemingly six or seven pounders, and presented altogether a soldierly and workmanlike appearance. After firing the salute, they took their guns to pieces and loaded them on the mules smartly, and then marched past without delay or confusion. Their uniform, as usual with Afghan troops, depended more on their own sweet pleasure than on the Afghan dress-regulations. The teams were composed partly of mules and partly of ponies. It is said that this battery marched from Kabul through the Hazarajat—a fact, if authentic, of considerable importance. As yet, neither the Survey nor the Intelligence Department has succeeded in obtaining any very accurate or trustworthy

lattice-work covered with felt. It was circular, with a diameter of 10 to 12 feet, and perpendicular sides rising six feet, from which height the roof slopes upward to a point, leaving at the apex a small aperture for the escape of smoke. This aperture in bad weather is closed by a felt cap. The roof is one solid piece of felt, or composed of several pieces sewn firmly together. The sides are likewise one single piece, the door being the only opening. The edges of the roof-piece lap a few inches over the sides. It can be taken to pieces, folded and packed, and unpacked and erected in no time. Such a one as we saw requires no stay-ropes except in the roughest weather. The points of the lattice-work are buried in the ground some eight or nine inches. This lattice-work folds up into a small compass, exactly like those ornamental wooden expanding flower-pot holders, or silver expanding napkin-rings. Undoubtedly a *kibitka* well made and finished is a far snugger, if not more portable abode, than the best tent ever turned out at Fatehgarh or Jubbulpore.

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knowledge of the routes between Herat and Kabul through the Hazarajat.[1] Several subordinates of the Survey have been sent to investigate these routes, but all have failed. It is something, therefore, to learn that there is a route practicable for mule and pony transport. The infantry consisted of but one, or, as some say, two companies, dressed anyhow, and armed with Sniders and Enfields. Their march-past was so extremely irregular and eccentric in its method, that it was difficult to decide what formation they were supposed to be in. They appeared to obey commands both by word and by bugle, and they progressed by a series of movements at the quick and the double. The two regiments of cavalry were much more satisfactory. Firstly, they were well mounted, almost all of them, on stout horses of Afghan breed, about 14 or 14.1 in height. The regiment of regular cavalry marched past to the harmonious sounds of some bugles and trumpets, supported by a drum or two, in fours, and with their swords at the carry. The officer or officers of each troop and squadron saluted after the British fashion. Some of the troopers were armed with carbines, which they carried on the right side of the saddle, not in buckets, but stowed away in a curious fashion under the right leg. The regiment of irregular cavalry raised from among the Chahar Aimak was as well mounted as the regular regiment, but evidently less drilled and disciplined. They marched past in half sections, and had no arms but muskets or rifles of native manufacture, which they load and fire on horseback. They no doubt closely resemble in their tactics the Turkoman cavalry with whom the Russians had to contend in their subjugation of Central Asia. They have no idea of any formation for combined attacks beyond that of manœuvring in a swarm round an enemy and discharging their guns at them. How, without swords, they can follow up any demoralisation produced by their wild system of "fire-tactics," is a mystery to me. The importance of this review consists in this, that probably never before have

[1] The travels of Captains Maitland and Hon. M. G. Talbot from Herat, *viâ* Obeh, Daulatyar, and Bamian, to Balkh, during the autumn and winter of 1885, have altered all this.

Afghan troops, regular or irregular, marched past before a British officer. From a review to co-operation in the field is perhaps, after all, not so very far a cry. But I must admit, that until Afghan troops are better drilled and disciplined, if possible by British officers, they will be rather an embarrassment than an assistance to a British force, unless we used them, as the Romans did their mercenaries, to break the brunt of the battle. Even then we run the risk of having them driven back in disordered masses on our disciplined ranks.

A few words about the route from Zindajan to Kuhsan. The main road from Herat to Kuhsan follows the right bank of the river, and the remains of three magnificent caravanserais of burnt brick along this route are evidences of the former commercial prosperity of Herat. One of these is situated nearly opposite to Ghorian; the second at Shabash, where there is a small village, and an advantageously situated but decidedly dilapidated fort; and the third at Tirpul. As far as Shabash, the open plain, studded with villages, stretches from the left bank of the river four miles to the foot of the Dushakh range, and south-west to the Persian frontier. Opposite Shabash the hills close on the left bank of the Hari Rud, whose trough thenceforward to Kuhsan does not exceed two miles in width, and, in contradistinction to its previous want of natural trees, is thickly overgrown with a species of poplar that makes excellent firewood, fortunately for us. Tirpul is one of the most striking bits of scenery we have come across, with its huge rambling tumble-down caravanserai (*[illegible]* Tirpul), with great domed chambers and courtyards [illegible] choked with heaps of brick and mortar; its bridge of five or six arches, built of burnt bricks a foot square, [illegible] pillars of stone-work, and paved with broad [illegible] still dark-green waters of the deep pools [illegible] islets covered with long waving [illegible] stunted poplars, amid which the [illegible] flow; and towering above the [illegible] the left bank, an isolated brick [illegible] viewed from the bridge, [illegible] In crossing a narrow but deep [illegible]

party got a most unpleasant ducking. The bridge not being too wide, and the horse nervous, the animal managed to plant his hind-legs on the edge of the bridge, which gave way promptly, and in went horse and rider. Both were extricated in no time. The rider mounted a sowar's horse, and rode sharp back to camp. But the memory of that evening ride of six or seven miles in wet clothes, in the teeth of a bitterly cold wind, will long abide with him. The tower mentioned above is at once a place of refuge from the Turkomans, and a point of vantage from which a heavy fire can be brought to bear on the bridge should they wish to cross it. It is barely two years since the Turkoman raiders rendered life around Kuhsan scarcely worth living. No wonder it is a mass of ruins, of tumble-down walls, and that the only conspicuous thing about it is a strong fort with a high wall and a deep broad moat full of water. It once boasted a *madrasa* (college), but I doubt if it can now boast of a single student, far less a preceptor. The only signs of its former decorative splendour are a few fragments of designs in glazed and coloured tiles still adhering to parts of the dome, gateway, and chambers. The inhabitants of Shabash are said to be Tatars of the Jagatai tribe. An individual, stating that he was a native of Lahore, and had been taken prisoner at Maiwand, turned up there, and then accompanied us to Kuhsan. Subsequent cross-examination has proved, with fair conclusiveness, that he is an impostor.

In viewing the Russian subjugation of Central Asia, one is apt at times to overlook the immense boon that they have conferred on the population of Northern Persia and Afghanistan by putting a bit in the mouth of those inveterate ruthless marauders, the Turkomans. Till within the last three or four years they used to ride as far south as Ghaur and Kalah-i-kah near Farah. For the last two years, even Kuhsan has been free from their *alamans.* As an instance of the utter destitution and depopulation resulting from the unbridled rapacity of the Turkomans, Sir Peter Lumsden's party state that between Sarakhs and Kuhsan they scarcely met half-a-dozen human beings. A loyal Afghan with whom I

was conversing to-day boldly maintained that the commencement *of the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman was the auspicious* event which sealed the doom of Turkoman freebooting, and sounded the knell of their nefarious slave-trade. The truth, however, is, that the Persian and Afghan Governments have neither possessed the power nor displayed the spirit and energy requisite for coping with these lawless tribes, which, too lazy to till the soil, and finding pastoral pursuits but little profitable, adopted the simpler and more attractive means of livelihood afforded by looting and selling into captivity their neighbours. The only Persian expedition sent against them in recent years resulted in a miserable disaster. Now and again a band of Turkomans would be cut off and made prisoners, *and then terrible would be the penalty that they had* to pay, not only for their own sins, but for the injuries and bereavements suffered by thousands at the hands of their fellow-tribesmen. One instance, I recollect, occurred at or near Shahrud, where some thirty Turkomans, being taken prisoners, were compelled to put each other to death. This severity, some would say brutality, of punishment,—but the memory of a thousand injuries to life, limb, and property, and a thousand domestic bereavements pleading for revenge—the deepest, bitterest revenge—is an extenuating feature not to be ignored,—so far from intimidating the Turkomans, merely added the thirst for revenge to the love of plunder. To this *unequal struggle—affording to the Turkoman all the pleasures* of the chase, combined with the risks and excitements of war, and attended by considerable pecuniary gain, and spreading ruin and devastation over the greater part of Khorasan—the capture of Geok Tepe and Ashkabad in 1880, combined with the previous stoppage of the slave-trade in Khiva, Bokhara, Samarkand, and other towns of Central Asia, imposed an effectual check; and the occupation of Merv, and the complete submission of the Tekke, Salor, and Sarik Turkomans, has finally put an end to it, except among the Kara Turkomans on the Oxus near Kilif, who still perpetrate raids on the Uzbeks of Maimena and Andkhur.

KUHSAN, 19*th November.*

The issue of a farewell order last night by Colonel Ridgeway reminds me that the individual existence of the Indian section of the Boundary Commission is at an end, and that the present is therefore a suitable term for a brief review of its acts and results. Nothing could have been more inauspicious than its early infancy, and nothing more successful than its maturity. The criticisms of the press, three or four months ago, with regard to almost every point connected with the strength, preparation, and outfit of the Mission, need only to be alluded to, not repeated. They cannot as yet have faded from the memory of the public. Not unnaturally the uncertainty of the supreme authority was reflected in every department. Hence it is that the representatives of most of the various corps and departments which form the Indian section of the Mission are unanimous in their complaints of the unusual difficulties and obstacles opposed to their efficient preparation of an expedition of such importance. On the part of the military authorities an air of incomprehensible mystery and reticence appears to have been adopted. One regiment furnishing a portion of the escort was warned to be in readiness for service,—what service was not stated, but could very well be conjectured. Why then make a secret of it? The other regiment got two, or at most three days' notice, and that when about to undergo a march of 850 miles, during which it would have to encounter the most trying vicissitudes of climate. One cannot, moreover, feel sufficiently thankful that the hastily considered intention of the Government to march the Mission across the desert in August and September proved abortive. "Man proposeth," &c. Anyhow, in this case the Government proposed and the Amir disposed; and whether or not the Amir be a true friend and ally of the British Government, he, on this occasion, showed himself a true friend of the Mission, when he so delayed its departure that its passage of the waterless desert was at least not made at the most thirst-productive of seasons. We all of us have still a vivid recollection of the heat at Rindli from the 31st August to 10th September. Could we and our horses, which were at times

put on a short allowance of water, and our camels, which on several occasions got no water at all, have borne up against heat aggravated by thirst and bad and deficient water? Moreover, it would appear that the Government entirely underrated the difficulties that attended the provision of supplies and water sufficient for the Mission during its passage across the desert. When Colonel Ridgeway, accompanied by Mr Merk, Captain Peacocke and others, reached Nushki on the 17th September, much, notwithstanding the able and energetic measures adopted by Mr Barnes and Captain Maitland, remained to be done. Not until an accurate report of the water-supply available from Sanduri to Shah Ismail had been submitted by Captain Peacocke, and it had been ascertained that the wells and other sources of water-supply between Shah Ismail and Galachah were being satisfactorily developed by Mr Barnes's subordinates, under the personal supervision of Mr Merk, and that the supplies laid in by Mr Barnes and furnished by the Amir's officials had been duly laid out at the various stages, would Colonel Ridgeway have been justified in starting to cross the desert. Now, as a matter of fact, the arrangements above specified were not completed before the 25th of September; and seeing that the Mission left Nushki between 29th September and 1st October, it is not unreasonable to say that on this occasion, as it has done on many another, both for individuals and Governments, the force of *circumstances stood the Government in better stead than its* own appreciation of the true nature of the enterprise on which it was embarking. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the necessity of consulting the Amir on most *points connected with the march was a source of embarrass*ment to the Government.

Cradled as it thus was in the lap of uncertainty, and embarked on its career in a hurried, no doubt unavoidably hurried way, without one word of God-speed, farewell, or encouragement from Government, the public, or even hardly from the press, which, instead of viewing it as an enterprise of national interest and a source of national pride, laid itself out to carp enviously at the mental and physical ...

its members, and to forebode its failure and futility, at the same time instituting odious comparisons with Russian policy and Russian Commissioners—this Mission has, nevertheless, shown itself able to cope with and overcome all these initial drawbacks. Never, perhaps, has any body of men, in defiance of ill-considered and unfounded assertions, shown themselves to be more thoroughly at home both at the desk and in the saddle. To pilot a force of some 1200 men, burdened with an abnormal quantity of *impedimenta*, through 226 miles of desert and some 540 miles of foreign territory inhabited by races of whose neutrality, far less friendliness, nothing certain could be predicated, without the loss of a man, beast, or load, by neglect or carelessness, and without once exciting the reputed fanatical spirit inherent in the Afghan, argues at once good organisation, thorough discipline, untiring energy, and a great power of self-restraint and conciliation.

As a proof that this march has not been without its physical trials, I will append here a list of the marches, with the distances as recorded by the perambulator. As the perambulator is usually wheeled in a straight line from point to point, and consequently does not always represent the windings of the road, I shall add two per cent to the total distance as shown by the perambulator, and the result will represent with fair accuracy the distance covered by the Mission between Nushki and Kuhsan. The heavy baggage of the Mission left Nushki on the evening of the 1st October, and reached Kuhsan on the evening of the 17th November; the actual duration of the march is therefore represented by forty-seven days. The actual number of marches is, as will be seen, thirty-eight:—

			Perambulator Miles.
Oct.	1.	Nushki to Sanduri,	10.5
„	2.	Sanduri to Band,	15.6
„	3.	Band to Umar Shah,	11.0
„	4.	Umar Shah to Zaru,	7.2
„	5.	Zaru to Kani,	19.0
„	6.	Kani to Gazeh Chah,	14.7
„	7.	Halt.	
„	8.	Gazeh Chah to Safiya,	18.3
„	9.	Safiya to Shah Ismail,	17.4

		Perambulator Miles.
Oct. 10.	Shah Ismail to Salian,	15.7
„ 11.	Salian to Muzhdan,	10.2
„ 12.	Muzhdan to Mamu,	14.9
„ 13.	Mamu to Galachah,	12.4
„ 14.	Halt.	
„ 15.	Galachah to Khwaja Ali,	57.0
„ 16-18.	Halt.	
	Total,	223.9
Oct. 19.	Khwaja Ali to Landi Barech,	17.8
„ 20.	Landi Barech to Rudbar,	13.1
„ 21.	Rudbar to Khaju,	19.5
„ 22.	Khaju to Chahar-burjak,	17.3
„ 23.	Chahar-burjak to Kalah-i-fath,	23.9
„ 24.	Halt.	
„ 25.	Kalah-i-fath to Padha-i-Sultan,	11.5
„ 26.	Padha-i-Sultan to Deh-i-Kamran,	15.6
„ 27.	Deh-i-Kamran to Deh-i-dadi,	12.8
„ 28.	Deh-i-dadi to Ibrahimabad,	6.7
„ 29.	Halt.	
„ 30.	Ibrahimabad to Makbara-i-Abil,	16.5
„ 31.	Makbara-i-Abil to Takht-i-Rustam,	17.8
Nov. 1.	Takht-i-Rustam to Panjdeh,	15.5
„ 2.	Panjdeh to Khushk Rud,	17.5
„ 3.	Khushk Rud to Kaïn,	12.0
„ 4.	Kaïn to Ging,	21.0
„ 5.	Ging to Zehkin,	22.0
„ 6.	Halt.	
„ 7.	Zehkin to Sangbur-karez,	17.0
„ 8.	Sangbur-karez to Karez-dasht,	23.5
„ 9.	Karez-dasht to Sar-mandal,	10.2
„ 10.	Sar-mandal to Sher Bakhsh,	20.9
„ 11.	Sher Baksh to Chah Gazak,	37.5
„ 12.	Halt.	
„ 13.	Chah Gazak to Pahra,	17.5
„ 14.	Pahra to Zindajan,	21.1
„ 15.	Halt.	
„ 16.	Zindajan to Rauzanak,	17.3
„ 17.	Rauzanak to Kuhsan,	23.0
	Total,	448.5
	Add,	223.9
		672.4
	Allowance of 2 per cent for deviations,	13.6
	Total,	686.0

Thus the average length of the marches, exclusive of halts, is rather over 18 miles a-day; and, including halts, 14.6 miles. The march from Khwaja Ali to Kuhsan shows an average of 18.2 miles excluding, and 15.23 including, halts. The latest remarkable march that has been made by any British force, is the now historic march of Sir Frederick Roberts's force from Kabul to Kandahar in 1880. If I remember rightly, that force kept up an average of 16 to 17 miles for some seventeen or eighteen days. It was composed of select regiments and corps, free of all possible *impedimenta,* provided with mule-carriage carefully selected, and burdened with only just as many followers as were indispensably necessary. On the other hand, the Mission is composed of at least two followers to each fighting man, is hampered with an average of four maunds of stores, baggage, and tentage per man, and is provided with camel transport. Sir Frederick Roberts's force was traversing a route of which every inch had been surveyed, and which had been recently marched over by many of the troops forming it, whereas the Mission has followed a route practically unknown. The latter, however, found its supplies ready collected for it; indeed, without such an arrangement its march would have been impossible.

During this long journey two remarkable forced marches have been made, on both occasions owing to the absence of water: firstly, 58 miles from Galachah to Khwaja Ali; and secondly, of about 60 miles from Sar-mandal to Chah Gazak, —the above distances being in both cases covered within thirty-seven hours, and that, too, not over macadamised roads, but across a desert deep in sand, and a hilly undulating tract of country. Not only do the troops of the escort merit every praise for their endurance of fatigue and their cheerful performance of heavy picket, guard, and rear-guard duties, but also for their almost unprecedented discipline and good conduct. Not a single complaint of any sort has been preferred against them by the inhabitants of the districts through which the Mission has passed. The humble follower is wont to be ignored in the award of praise; but as the burden of toil—albeit that he was very often given a lift on the back of a camel—

fell heavily also on him, let him be given his due. When he reached camp, his day's work had often only begun. And of all the followers, none perhaps had a rougher time of it than the "kit" and the "bearer."

KHUSHK, *4th December.*

Before I follow the progress of the Mission after its dispersal from Kuhsan on the 24th and 25th ultimo over the face of Badkis, I must hark back to the 19th, when Sir Peter Lumsden joined us. A detailed description of the *istikbal*[1] and the formal exchange of visits between the British Commissioner and the Afghan officials, Sardar Mohammad Sarwar Khan Naib-ul-hukuma and Kazi Saad-ud-din, are unnecessary. It was but a repetition of what occurred on the 14th and 15th November at Zindajan—the same formalities, the same personages to a great extent, and the same display of *varicoloured uniform exhumed from the depths of trunks* expressly for the occasion. General Lumsden was received by a guard of honour of the 20th Panjab Infantry opposite the durbar tent on his arrival in camp; and on his dismounting, all the European and native officers of the Indian section were presented to him. The rest of the day—or rather what little of it was left after the receipt and return of the ceremonial visits—was devoted to consultations, doubtless respecting the future movements of the Commission. The Governor of Herat and the Afghan Commissioner were of course present, as it rested with them not only to carry into effect any plans decided on, but also to give advice and information.

However, I am steaming ahead, whereas both time and method indicate "hard astern." With Sir Peter Lumsden arrived Mr A. Condie Stephen, Captain Barrow, Nawab Mirza Hasan Ali Khan, and Mr Simpson, the special artist of the 'Illustrated London News.' Colonel Stewart has been detained in England by ill health, but it is just possible that

[1] *Istikbal* is the oriental ceremony of going out to meet an arrival. [illegible] rank of the personage that heads the *istikbal*, the size of the escort [illegible] distance to which it goes out, are in proportion to the rank of [illegible] arriving.

he may join us later. It is undoubtedly to be regretted that he is not with the Commission, as of course his prolonged residence in this vicinity has given him an intimate acquaintance with the country, and the advice and information he could have at once afforded would have been of service. We had expected to find Mr Herbert, one of the *attachés* of the Legation at Teheran, with General Lumsden. Illness, however, compelled him to turn back from Sabzawar or thereabouts. Of the universal courtesy and hospitality experienced by the Commissioner and his party in Persia, the public has already been informed through the columns of the press. Received at Enzelli by a Persian official specially deputed by the Shah, lodged and entertained in the Shah's own seaside residence there, conveyed to Teheran in one of the Shah's own royal carriages, and on his arrival there granted a personal interview in which every mark of goodwill and cordiality was displayed—what more could a monarch do? Could courtesy go further? Admitted, it could not. Yet, what a pity that Persia should be so enslaved to Russian behests and Russian interests, that it has not the pluck to raise a little finger in self-defence! What a chance to let slip! Here we see England and Afghanistan uniting to check the aggression of Russia, and we know that Persia's true interests are identical with theirs. And yet Persia stands aloof silent and neutral. What can be the motive of such a policy, if not Russian pressure? And what is the bribe that Russia holds out to Persia to allay its apprehensions while it stealthily undermines its power? What compensation has it promised to it for the territory out of which it has wheedled or coerced it on its northern frontier? With what golden apple is it seducing it from the path of wisdom and foresight, while it quietly spreads its network of military force around the north-eastern angle of its dominions? Is it Herat and Kandahar—the revival of the glorious days of the Suffavean dynasty, and the transient triumphs of Nadir Shah—that are held out as a bait to the fourth monarch of the Kajar tribe? Let him not put his faith in princes. An oriental potentate, if any, should believe in that proverb.

Certain it is that the Persian officials were courteous in a marked degree. At Mashhad the Commission were housed in splendid tents in a garden outside the town reserved for their sole use, and on their arrival some of the cooks of the Governor of Khorasan, Abdul-Wahhab Khan, Asaf-ud-daulah, were sent down to prepare their breakfast, and the Governor's own band discoursed sweet music during the repast. This is progress. We may still hope to dine at a Persian regimental mess, to the strains of a Persian regimental band; and if only some pious Mohammedan could unearth an original and authentic copy of the Koran, in which those verses condemning the most moderate addiction to the juice of the grape (even in private), and extending to all good Mussulmans the Jewish abhorrence for the flesh of the pig, could not be found, the one barrier which prevents the Mohammedan from being a thorough good fellow and boon companion would be removed. We all know very well how little at heart and in private life educated Mussulmans are fettered by the trammels of their religion. A very large number of them, while outwardly conforming to the precepts of their faith, make no secret of their deistic or atheistic beliefs. And as for abstention from intoxicating liquors, it is a law observed more in the spirit than in the letter. The accursed Jew and the abject Armenian make the wine, and the worthy Mussulman drinks it in the privacy of his own chamber. I must admit that the Mussulman is rigid on the subject of pork. But then I doubt if he ever read Elia's "Dissertation on Roast Pig."

Sir Peter Lumsden reached Mashhad on the 31st October, and stayed there two days, starting on 2d November for Sarakhs, which was reached on the 8th. Captain Barrow surveyed the road from Mashhad to Sarakhs. For the first two marches inhabited villages and cultivated fields were passed; but during the five remaining marches nothing but a depopulated jungle (though capable of cultivation, and in former times actually cultivated) was seen. This, of course, is the work of the Turkomans, who for years past have raided almost up to the walls of Mashhad. New Sarakhs is a fort and

town on the left bank of the Hari Rud, garrisoned by some 400 or 500 Persian troops. The river-bed here is about half a mile wide and quite dry, though a few miles below—*i.e*, northward—the water reappears. Ten miles south of Sarakhs is a dam whence water is turned off both to New Sarakhs and the Russian camp between Old Sarakhs and the river-bed. The Russians could at any moment destroy this dam and rob New Sarakhs of its water-supply. The Russian force there consists of some 600 men housed in *kibitkas*. There is also an outpost of 60 infantry lodged in reed-shanties at Pul-i-Khatun. When Sir P. Lumsden arrived, both General Komaroff, the Governor of the Russian trans-Caspian province, and Colonel Alikhanoff were there. Visits were exchanged between Mr Stephen and Colonel Alikhanoff, but General Komaroff avoided a meeting with the British Commissioner.[1] General Zelenoy was not there. Mr Simpson, who was not fettered by any diplomatic ties, crossed the Hari Rud bed to the Russian camp, and called on General Komaroff to ask permission to make some sketches in the neighbourhood. These you will see in due time in the 'Illustrated.' General Komaroff received him courteously, and invited him to stop and see some Cossack dances which were being performed by the Cossacks of the garrison for the edification of their officers. This garrison is composed of regular Russian infantry, Cossacks, and irregular cavalry recruited from among the Tekke and Akhal Turkomans. So the Russians are already beginning to utilise their Turkoman subjects for military purposes. They are very handy fellows, well mounted, hardy, require no tents or commissariat, graze their horses anywhere, and can make very long marches. The Jamshidi irregulars in the Amir's service are just the same stamp of troops. Two troops (*risalas*) of them furnish our escorts, and several more were in the train of the Naib-ul-hukuma. See them arrive at the camping-

[1] The arrival of Sir P. Lumsden at New Sarakhs, while Komaroff was encamped at Old Sarakhs, appears to have produced nothing but unpleasantness. The Russian and English journals each accuse the opposite party of gross discourtesy and insolence.

ground, picket their horses all over the valley to graze, and bivouac under the canopy of heaven. These are just the stamp of men to operate in a desolate tract like Badkis; and if the Russians should prove unable to march a force of regulars of all arms across Badkis to Herat, they would find no difficulty in despatching several thousands of these Turkomans across it to co-operate with regulars moving along the banks of the Murghab and the Hari Rud. Vambéry is pleased to libel the Chahar Aimak, as being turbulent and likely to give rise to disputes with the neighbouring Turkomans under Russian rule, thereby endangering the durability of the frontier soon about to be defined. Vambéry evidently knows but little about these tribes, which show themselves more tractable than the Afghans and Turkomans.

Sir Peter Lumsden left Sarakhs on the 11th, and reached Kuhsan on the 19th, being escorted from Mashhad to the latter place by a troop of Persian cavalry. Supplies for his party were laid out by the Persian Government as far as the Stoi Pass, and beyond that by the Afghans. Mr Finn, of the Legation at Teheran, who takes Colonel Stewart's place during his absence on sick-leave, left the party on the Perso-Afghan frontier and returned to Mashhad. The road from New Sarakhs to Kuhsan was surveyed by Captain Barrow. It is in a very bad state of repair, in some places barely passable for mules and ponies. Its banks are absolutely depopulated. Ruined forts and caravanserais and deserted villages were the only proof that there ever had been people settled here. In one or two places a few *tufangchis* (sort of armed police) were found. The stages were:—

	Miles.
1. Sarakhs to Naurozabad,	16
2. Naurozabad to Pul-i-Khatun,	22
3. Pul-i-Khatun to Khoja Sahm-ud-din,	24
4. Khoja Sahm-ud-din to Gaular,	8
5. Gaular to Stoi,	17
6. Stoi to Tuti-darakht,	19
7. Tuti-darakht to Du-ab,	16
8. Du-ab to Toman Aka,	17
9. Toman Aka to Kuhsan,	16
Total,	155

As this route is of some strategical importance, I will enter into a fuller description. As I have before said, the Russians hold Pul-i-Khatun at the junction of the Keshef with the Hari Rud, and they thus dominate two lines of advance on Mashhad. Near Pul-i-Khatun the country on the left bank of the river is low and undulating, whereas the right bank is bordered by high ground, which both conceals the movements of troops behind and enables a force occupying it to observe all the movements of troops manœuvring on the opposite side of the river. South of Pul-i-Khatun the road crosses a very rugged pass—a pass, indeed, so rugged as to be completely impassable to wheeled artillery or transport. In its present condition it imposes an effectual barrier to the advance of an army marching on Herat. But if the Russians are allowed to remain at Pul-i-Khatun, it cannot be doubted that they will take an early opportunity of setting their engineers to work to improve this road.[1] From Pul-i-Khatun to the Zulfikar Pass the right bank is bordered by a sheer precipice some 150 to 200 feet in height, rendering the river inaccessible. Such a feature is of course a disadvantage to a force advancing to attack Herat, as it would prevent any co-operation between a force on the left and a force on the right bank. At Gaular the road leaves the river and crosses the eastern spurs of the Jam range. Twenty-five miles from Gaular the top of the Stoi Pass, 4000 feet above the bed of the Hari Rud, is reached. This pass is impassable for any animals but horses, mules, and ponies. From the top of the pass to Tuti-darakht (11 miles) the descent is continuous. Three miles beyond Du-ab the road rejoins the Hari Rud at a place named Kaman-i-bihisht, and at Toman Aka crosses the river into Afghan territory.

Kuhsan is a large straggling village, containing a ruined *madrasa* (said to have been founded by the same grand-daughter of Taimur Lang—commonly called Tamerlane—who built the bridge at Pul-i-Khatun), a tolerably strong fort

[1] It is reported that they are now (May 1886) improving the communications southward, from Pul-i-Khatun on the right, if not also on the left, bank of the Hari Rud.

surrounded by a wide and deep moat, a considerable number of dwellings, whether tenanted or deserted, and a large area of walled gardens and fields. We were all glad to obtain here a plentiful supply of dried lucerne for our horses, who for some weeks had been fed solely on *bhoosa* (chopped straw) and barley. The unusual cold of the weather from the 15th to 20th November created a great demand for warm clothing for servants and horses—a demand of which the Herati traders took every advantage. Since the 21st November we have enjoyed comparatively mild and pleasant weather. The banks of the Hari Rud for some miles above and below Kuhsan are thickly overgrown with poplars, many of which had been previously felled to provide our camp with firewood, a plentiful supply of which during the intense cold was a godsend to all. In this jungle, they say, tigers were found not many years ago. The area of land under cultivation around Kuhsan is very considerable. Some nine miles west of Kuhsan is situated the fort named Kafir-Kalah, till recently claimed by the Persian Government. The Afghan frontier outpost is now there, the Persian being at Kariz.

Although Kuhsan is not a lively place, we all of us thoroughly enjoyed our week's rest from the 18th to the 24th. When I say rest, I do not mean idleness, but emancipation from daily marching and rising before cock-crow. We had nothing to shoot, though a solitary woodcock was seen. Nearer Herat large flocks of duck, teal, and sand-grouse promised excellent sport had we had leisure. However, we had plenty to do for the first four or five days. How to keep warm was a problem we all strove hard to solve, and I doubt if many of us were successful. When General Lumsden arrived on the 19th, the arrangements and preparations for our future movements commenced. The officers of the Intelligence Department made excursions to Kafir-Kalah and Ghorian, and those of the Survey were busy completing their past work and preparing for the future. Every one had arrears of official and private work to pull up. The Commissariat, with becoming unselfishness, was busy providing warm clothing for us all, while every individual was

solely absorbed in protecting "No. 1" from the bitter cold. On the 22d and 23d, when the routes and movements of the several parties had been decided, commenced the work of the Transport. No doubt the prime cause of the discontent and insubordination of the camel owners and drivers may be traced to the treatment they experienced—the Quetta men at the hands of the contractor Abdullah Khan, and those of Anardara, Sabzawar, and Herat at the hands of the Afghan officials. The nominal rate of hire of all the camels engaged was Rs. 35 a-month; but it is very certain that the owners themselves, especially the Afghan owners, received but a modicum of this exorbitantly high charge. That an opportunity of fleecing the wealthy British Government should be thrown away was out of the question, but that the humble camel-owner should be allowed to take the wool could not be tolerated for a moment. No: the fountain-head of our troubles about transport must be sought for in higher and more favoured circles. If the camel-owner himself could have got Rs. 35 a-month he would have gone with us to the antipodes. And what camels! The Quetta contractor, with all his faults and shortcomings, at least gave us fine full-grown animals; but of the condition and capabilities of the transport that replaced them at Kuhsan—well, the less said the better. Their physical inferiority, however, might have been excused if their owners had evinced a reasonable tractability of disposition. So discontented, however, were they with the terms on which they had been engaged or impressed by the Afghan officials, and so averse were they to the kind of employment for which they were destined, that their obstructive tactics very nearly obliged the Commission to postpone its departure beyond the 25th. On the morning of the 24th, General Lumsden's party, consisting of Mr A. Condie Stephen, Captains Durand, Barrow, and De Laessoe, Major Holdich and Mr Simpson, and Mirza Hasan Ali Khan, with an escort of 50 lances under Captain Heath, and Surgeon Charles in medical charge, being provided with mule and pony transport, started for Panjdeh. It was intended that Captains Gore, Maitland, and Peacocke, and

Lieutenant the Honourable M. G. Talbot, with the Survey and Intelligence parties, under an escort of Jamshidi Irregular Horse, should start at the same time. However, no sooner did the owners of the camels intended for their use ascertain the work for which they had been told off, than they refused point-blank to move one step. Persuasion availed nothing. The men left their camels and started off with their bundles of kit towards Herat. Afghan sowars had to be sent to bring them back, and it was then ascertained that they had only accepted the terms offered them by the Afghan officials on the condition that they should go straight to Khushk with Colonel Ridgeway's party, and there be dismissed. Consequently the loads had to be taken off their camels and reloaded on others, and it was late in the afternoon before the Survey and Intelligence parties got under way. In the meantime the Quetta contractor had been playing a pretty fast-and-loose sort of game — a game *à la* Fabius Cunctator, with the addition of lies and false promises. The shades of night on the 24th closed in, and his promised camels were still "grazing in the jungle." Dawn on the 25th produced the same answer; and finally it was decided that Colonel Ridgeway's party, consisting of the main bodies of the cavalry and infantry escorts, Captain Yate and Mr Merk, Dr Aitchison, Captain Griesbach, Major Rind, Lieutenant Yate, and Dr Weir, with Dr Owen in medical charge, should march at once, leaving the heavy baggage at Kuhsan in charge of Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din and an Afghan escort until transport for them could be obtained from Herat. In the meantime Ressaldar Faiz Mahomed Khan, the official deputed by Kazi Saad-ud-din, who accompanied General Lumsden, to remain in attendance on Colonel Ridgeway, had sent off sowars post-haste towards Herat both to stop and bring back the Quetta camels, and procure others if necessary. They succeeded so well that the heavy baggage was able to start from Kuhsan on the morning of the 26th, overtaking Colonel Ridgeway's party the same evening at Chashma-i-sabz.

CHAPTER VI.

KUHSAN TO BALA MURGHAB.

KHWAJA KALANDAR, NEAR KHUSHK,
5th December.

IT is nearly a fortnight since the Commission split up into four parties of varying sizes with varied objects, and in another ten days the majority of us will be reassembled in winter-quarters. Chahar Shamba is the place originally fixed on at Kuhsan, but now I hear vague rumours that the odds on Bala Murghab are improving. It is said that the latter place is warmer, but the former affords more supplies. For the past three days we have received warning from the weather that the winter is nigh. Heavy low clouds, and rain like a Scotch mist, with a damp chilly atmosphere and frost at night, have not added to the joys of life. To-day, as we marched from Khushk to Khwaja Kalandar, we saw snow lying on the range of hills distant some miles to our right—*i.e.*, to the south, for our course up the Khushk Rud ran east or south of east. Bala Murghab has, we learned at Khushk, been occupied by a settlement of 1000 (some say 500) families of Jamshidis from the latter place under Aminullah Khan, third son of the late chief, Khan Aga, whom Ayub Khan, unjustifiably it would seem, put to death in 1881. It is said that even that severe and impolitic act has no alienated from him (Ayub Khan) the loyalty and sympath of the Jamshidis. This statement, however, may be receiv with caution. Whether, however, the Jamshidis are faithf adherents of Amir Abdur Rahman or not, they obey

behests, and are now cultivating Bala Murghab, which for some years had been deserted. Similarly, Aminullah Khan, second son of Khan Aga, was installed last year as Governor of Panjdeh. By a recent order of the Amir, Aminullah Khan has been replaced by Yalantush Khan. The occupation of Panjdeh, the headquarters of the Saruk Turkomans, and of Bala Murghab by Afghan troops, is undoubtedly a counter-stroke to the aggressive movements of Russia, and not improbably the outcome of suggestions made by a Government which is pledged to exclude Russian influence from Afghanistan. The Saruk Turkomans, alarmed by the annexation of Merv, sent envoys more than a year ago to Herat imploring Afghan protection. The despatch of Yalantush Khan was the response. There is not much doubt that the Russian Government, whether as the dominant power in Turkistan and over the great majority of Turkomans, or as the suzerain of the Amir of Bokhara, whose ancestors have now and again extended their frontiers to Maimena and Panjdeh, or even farther south, will advance a claim to all territory now occupied by Turkomans and Uzbeks. However, it seems equally improbable that the Government, who is taking up the cudgels on behalf of the Amir of Afghanistan, will be disposed to admit any such claim; and indeed, both on the ground of prescriptive right and present possession, the Afghan claim is so strong as scarcely to admit of being overruled.[1]

General Lumsden's party must have reached Panjdeh three or four days ago. The Governor of Herat encamped at Tutuchi on the 29th ultimo when we were there, and on the 30th marched for Kara-tapa to join the General. On the 27th, as we stood on the top of a high peak above the pass by which we crossed the so-called Paropamisus (known locally as the Kuh-i-Kaitu) from Chashma-i-sabz to Asiab-dev, we then saw the Governor and his escort crossing the *dasht* from Ghorian. When I say we saw them, I mean we saw the dust they raised. Crossing the Paropamisus by the same pass as we did, they marched parallel to and between

[1] Might, however, has overruled right.

s and that range, crossing our route at Tutuchi. Desolate s Badkis is now, it has yet, at least near the Paropamisus, water-supply ample for drinking purposes, though not large enough to irrigate more than a small area of land. This latter point, however, in a country where rain-crops are extensively grown (as, for instance, at Khushk, where the tops and slopes of the hills on either bank are cultivated, and also, I am told, at Bala Murghab and Maimena) is of no great moment. I am, of course, speaking in particular of the country we traversed north of, and parallel to, the Paropamisus, and distant therefrom some 15 to 20 miles. Every few miles a stream crossed our path—a spring of delicious, cool, clear, sparkling water, the purity of the appearance of which, however, was often spoiled by the black soil of the channel. In fact, the soil is simply pregnant with springs, and ready to give birth to them on the smallest provocation. A few turns of a spade would, I think, be the only human assistance required; nature would do the rest. Plentiful, however, as is the water here, it is not so with food and fodder. These latter are *nil*, except grazing. All our supplies and those for the General's party and the Naib-ul-hukuma and his suite had to be sent from Herat, Khushk, and Kalah-i-nau. Although the country for 20 or 30 miles to the north of the Paropamisus is fairly well supplied with water, there is little or none beyond that, except on the route from Gulran *viâ* Kangruali and Adam Yulan to Pul-i-Khatun. Consequently the movement of regular troops across it would be a matter of some difficulty. The irregular horse of the neighbouring districts, be they Turkoman, Afghan, or of the Chahar Aimak tribes independent as they are of commissariat, think little o traversing its arid tracts. Possibly, also, the Cossack woul find it no obstacle to his movements.

CAMP KOKCHAIL, *6th December*

I to-day heard of the arrival of Sir Peter Lumsden n Panjdeh, on the 2d instant. His marches are as follows:—

		Miles
Nov. 24.	Kuhsan to Chashma-i-sabz, ...	23
„ 25.	Chashma-i-sabz to Asiab-dev, ...	10½
„ 26.	Asiab-dev to Karabagh, ...	8
„ 27.	Karabagh to Tutuchi, ...	10
„ 28.	Tutuchi to Kara-tapa, ...	20
„ 29.	Kara-tapa to Chaman-i-bed, ...	17¼
„ 30.	Chaman-i-bed to Kalah-i-maur, ...	20½
Dec. 1.	Kalah-i-maur to Burj-i-Anzar Khan, . .	9
„ 2.	Burj-i-Anzar Khan to Pul-i-khishti, . .	19
	Total, ...	146¾

As far as Tutuchi, General Lumsden's and Colonel Ridgeway's parties followed the same route. At Kara-tapa the former entered the valley of the Khushk and followed it thence to Pul-i-Khishti (the bridge of bricks, not Pul-i-Kishti, or bridge of boats, as printed in the latest Survey map), where it flows into the Murghab. In the Khushk valley a number of common pigs were seen, and four speared. We, however, saw neither pigs nor their traces near Khushk and between that place and Khwaja Kalandar although their traces were seen on the banks of a small stream during our march to Khushk on 22 December. Since we crossed the Paropamisus we have been traversing a country that [illegible] a poor field to the sportsman. The [illegible] most wild and wary; but that is to be expected in a country where every man carries a gun and more than [illegible] When we were at Chashma-i-sabz, south of the Paropamisus, [illegible]
[illegible]

us and that range, crossing our route at Tutuchi. Desolate as Badkis is now, it has yet, at least near the Paropamisus, a water-supply ample for drinking purposes, though not large enough to irrigate more than a small area of land. This latter point, however, in a country where rain-crops are extensively grown (as, for instance, at Khushk, where the tops and slopes of the hills on either bank are cultivated, and also, I am told, at Bala Murghab and Maimena) is of no great moment. I am, of course, speaking in particular of the country we traversed north of, and parallel to, the Paropamisus, and distant therefrom some 15 to 20 miles. Every few miles a stream crossed our path—a spring of delicious, cool, clear, sparkling water, the purity of the appearance of which, however, was often spoiled by the black soil of the channel. In fact, the soil is simply pregnant with springs, and ready to give birth to them on the smallest provocation. A few turns of a spade would, I think, be the only human assistance required; nature would do the rest. Plentiful, however, as is the water here, it is not so with food and fodder. These latter are *nil*, except grazing. All our supplies and those for the General's party and the Naib-ul-hukuma and his suite had to be sent from Herat, Khushk, and Kalah-i-nau. Although the country for 20 or 30 miles to the north of the Paropamisus is fairly well supplied with water, there is little or none beyond that, except on the route from Gulran *viâ* Kangruali and Adam Yulan to Pul-i-Khatun. Consequently the movement of regular troops across it would be a matter of some difficulty. The irregular horse of the neighbouring districts, be they Turkoman, Afghan, or of the Chahar Aimak tribes, independent as they are of commissariat, think little of traversing its arid tracts. Possibly, also, the Cossack would find it no obstacle to his movements.

CAMP KOKCHAIL, *6th December.*

I to-day heard of the arrival of Sir Peter Lumsden near Panjdeh, on the 2d instant. His marches are as follows:—

		Miles.
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„ 26.	Asiab-dev to Karabagh, ...	8
„ 27.	Karabagh to Tutuchi,.	10
„ 28.	Tutuchi to Kara-tapa, ...	29
„ 29.	Kara-tapa to Chaman-i-bed, ...	17¾
„ 30.	Chaman-i-bed to Kalah-i-maur, ...	20½
Dec. 1.	Kalah-i-maur to Burj-i-Auzar Khan, . . .	9
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cause. But to revert to the wild denizens of Badkis: we saw large herds of antelope, but so wild that no one could get within 200 yards of them, if so near. A few *uriyal* (wild sheep), here called *mull* or *kuch*, were observed at a distance. Very fine specimens of their horns were seen in some of the *ziarats*. In the Ziarat-i-laglag-khana, near Khushk, I saw a fine pair of horns which strongly resembled those of the Barahsinga of Cashmere, though others have suggested that they are those of the Siberian stag. Wolves and foxes we saw, but the ruggedness of the country gave dogs no chance after them. We were all particularly keen to see a wild ass, but fortune did not favour us. The leopard is said to haunt the Paropamisus, and the tiger the jungles of the Khushk and Murghab valleys. Of small game, the *chikore* (red-legged partridge) was found in abundance on any rocky slopes near a stream; snipe on every bit of marshy ground; duck, teal, and geese near Khushk; and the *siyah-sina*, or black-breasted sand-grouse, was frequently seen in large flocks.

I must, however, turn from the trivial theme of game, big or small, to the more weighty subject of the movements and interests of the Commission. It is evident that the lower classes of the Afghans and Chahar Aimak by no means comprehend the object for which a British Commission has been sent here. It is not to be expected they should. I was asked the other day by a Jamshidi what our little escort would do if the Russians wanted to fight. Had I been prone to oriental figures of speech, or versed in oriental veracity, I should have replied that one Briton was a match for a score of Russians, and that, supported by the indomitable valour of the Jamshidis, we would, *Inshallah*, make the Russian bite the dust. Being a simple Englishman, I said that neither we nor the Russians had at present come here to fight with the deadly arms of war, though doubtless those wily weapons of intrigue and diplomacy, the tongue and the pen, would find their work cut out for them. My interrogator did not deem this answer satisfactory, for he again persisted, "But suppose the Russians insist on fight-

ing at once."[1] Seeing that a lengthy exposition of Russian policy would not be likely to convince my companion, I told him that in that case he would soon see some thousands of British troops where now there were but a few hundreds. If the ideas of one man may be held to represent those of the generality, two inferences may be drawn from this conversation: firstly, that the inhabitants of this country would not view with disfavour the presence of a strong British force here as a protection against Russian aggression; and secondly, that they deem such a force necessary, and are surprised to see nothing but a weak escort.

There is a report current which may explain why the inhabitants of these districts anticipate some resort to force. Some two weeks ago information reached Ghaus-ud-din, the Afghan General commanding at Bala Murghab, through Yalantush Khan, Governor of Panjdeh, that Alikhanoff (here always called Ali Khan) was advancing with a body of troops to occupy the last-named place. The Afghan General, with laudable energy and promptitude, started off, accompanied by all his cavalry, with a foot-soldier seated behind each trooper, for Panjdeh (at the same time sending off special messengers to the Naib-ul-hukuma and Kazi Saad-ud-din), and on arrival there found Alikhanoff near Pul-i-khishti. He at once wrote to ask Alikhanoff's intentions, intimating that if he wished to fight, he was quite prepared to resist him. Alikhanoff, finding that he was too late, then withdrew. If this story be true, then it would appear that Alikhanoff, who is said to have been at Sarakhs on the 8th when General Lumsden arrived there, must have started for Panjdeh soon after the latter left for Kuhsan. We furthermore see in this occurrence,—firstly, a specimen of the manœuvres by which the members of the Russian Commission hope to outwit the British; and secondly, a practical proof of the determination of the Afghan to manfully resist Russian aggression and to be

[1] Circumstances have proved that the untutored Jamshidi more accurately forecast the future than all the sapience of a Ministry headed by Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville.

our true friends and allies. If it be also true that the Sarakh Turkomans solicited Afghan protection, the Russian claim to Panjdeh has not a leg to stand on. Of the feeling of the Uzbek population at and around Maimena I have as yet heard nothing; but, judging by the antipathy of the Jamshidis and the Turkomans at Panjdeh, and the rumoured discontent of the Tekkes at Merv, not to mention that their status under Afghan rule is far more independent than it would be under Russian, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the generous offer of Russian suzerainty and protection will, if made, meet with but a lukewarm reception, if not a downright refusal.

Of the four tribes of the Chahar Aimak, Jamshidis, Hazaras, Taimanis, and Firuzkuhis, the two former alone occupy territory adjacent to the probable frontier of the future. Of the distribution of the Jamshidis and Hazaras, as we are or have been in their midst, I will give a few details. The head-quarters of the Jamshidi tribe is at Khushk, in which town and in the adjacent villages scattered eastward along the banks of the Khushk or among the neighbouring hills, and thence northward to the Kotal-i-Zinda-hasham, which we crossed on to-day's march, and which is the boundary-line between the Jamshidi and Hazara country, the population is estimated at about 2000 families. Add to this the 1000 already mentioned as located at Bala Murghab, and some 500 to 1000 families said to be resident in or around Herat. The eldest son of Khan Aga, Haidar Kuli Khan, resides in Herat. He is said to be a man of no ability or influence, and was hence supplanted in the chieftainship by the second son, Yalantush Khan, on whom the Amir bestowed the title of Amin-ud-daulah when he sent him recently to occupy and govern Panjdeh. The fortified residence of the chief of the clan is situated in the town of Khushk. Wali Mohammed Khan, nephew and son-in-law of Khan Aga, at present residing there, visited Colonel Ridgeway during our halt. This family is said to be connected by matrimonial ties both with Ayub Khan and Musa Jan. The reigning or aspiring rulers of Afghanistan have a simple and popular method of con-

ciliating to themselves chiefs of whose allegiance they are doubtful, by taking to wife one of their near female relatives. Such a method, however, when counterbalanced by the assassination of the chief himself, is apt to fail in its object. The chief of the Hazaras, Mohammed Khan, Nizam-ud-daulah, with another brother, Mohammed Kuli Khan, is now living at Kalah-i-nau, the chief town of the tribe. Of the two other brothers, one, Sher Mohammed Khan, is said to be with the Naib-ul-hukuma, and the other, Mahmud Khan, with the Amir at Kabul. The two latter are no doubt retained as hostages for the fidelity of the tribe. From the top of the Kotal-i-Zinda-hasham, which lies some 12 or 15 miles east of Kushk, we looked north-east over the country populated by these Hazaras.[1]

[1] The Hazaras are not, properly speaking, one of the four tribes of the Char Aimak, who consist of the Taimuris, Jamshidis, Firuzkuhis, and Taimanis. The Hazaras of Kalah-i-nau, Badkis, Bakharz, and Mashhad are of the same origin as the Barbari Hazaras of the Hazarajat and the Kohistan of Kabul. The features of both are exactly alike, being of the Mongolian type. They differ only in their religion, the Barbaris being Shias and the others Sunnis. The manners, customs, and language of both are identical. In the time of Sultan Abu Said Saljuki (i.e., some 700 or 800 years ago), the Hazaras revolted. That monarch attacked them, and carrying off 1000 families of them as hostages, settled them in the district of Herat. Hence their name from hazar (=1000). During the early part of the reign of the present Shah of Persia, Nasir-ud-din, owing to their population having abnormally increased, several thousand families migrated westward. At first they settled near Isfarain in the western part of Khorasan. Afterwards they spread hither and thither, and now some dwell in the Bakharz district, near Muhsinabad, and others (about 500 families) at Kana-gusha and Kana-bait, near Mashhad. It is estimated that there are not more than 1100 or 1200 families of Hazaras now dwelling in Persian territory. The western Hazaras are divided into the two main branches of Deh-zangi and Deh-kundi. The former is said to number some 2000 families and to have no subdivisions. The latter has many subdivisions (the names of about forty are known), and numbers, it is said, from 7000 to 8000 families. The Deh-zangis are also found settled in the Hazarajat between Daulatyar and Kabul. Of the Deh-kundis, it is said the majority dwell near Herat and Kalah-i-nau, and the remainder in Khorasan. The chief of those at Kalah-i-nau is Mohammed Khan, Nizam-ud-daulah; of those near Herat, Ahmed Kuli Khan, son of Sikandar Khan; and of those in Khorasan, Yusuf Khan, Beglerbegi. The latter is said to be 100 years old, has the rank of Amir-i-panj, and lives at Muhsinabad. He has four sons, of whom the most influential is Ismail Khan. Owing to his father's age and infirmity he now practically rules the Khorasan section, residing at Kana-gusha and Kana-bait, near Mashhad. His brother, Gul Mohammed Khan, resides in Bakharz, and rules that section in his behalf.

General Lumsden, on his approach to Panjdeh, accompanied by the Governor of Herat and the Afghan Commissioner, was received by the Governor and the General commanding the Amir's forces there with the honours due to his rank and position. The reception accorded to him is said to have been in all respects cordial and amicable. The troops were drawn up in two lines, the first consisting of a regiment of infantry 600 strong, with two brass mule-battery guns on their right, and the second of a regiment of cavalry 400 strong. A salute was fired. It is not stated whether General Lumsden was asked to inspect them, as Colonel Ridgeway was asked to do and did near Ghorian. But none the less, to see Afghan troops parading for and saluting a British general is an important point of departure in the history of our relations with Afghanistan.

PADDA-I-KACH, *7th December.*

Before giving a brief description of our own march from Kuhsan, I desire to say a few words of the movements of the Survey, Intelligence, and Geological parties that have been detached. With General Lumsden went Major Holdich, and under his supervision the route from Kuhsan to Panjdeh, described above, has been surveyed. It is intended also to make a survey on a large scale of Panjdeh and its environs, as it is considered to be an important point affording a strong defensive position. The same party will conduct the survey up the Murghab to Bala Murghab. I may as well repeat what I mentioned three weeks ago, that native subordinates of the Survey and Intelligence Departments left us at Zindajan on the 15th ultimo to travel *viâ* Herat and the Ardawan Pass to Bala Murghab. I have since heard that they came by the Baba not Ardawan Pass. With regard to the pass known as the Paband-i-Baba, between Herat and Khushk, Captain Griesbach left us two days ago to cross it towards

Ismail Khan has the honorary rank of Sartip (Colonel). The two other sons, Khan Baba Khan and Mohammed Raza Khan, are by a different mother and have but little influence. The former usually resides in Mashhad, doubtless as a sort of hostage for the fidelity and good conduct of the tribe, just as Mahmud Khan resides at Kabul as security for the Hazaras of Kalah-i-nau.

Herat; and although the objects of his expedition are in the main photographical and geological, I have little doubt that he will be able to furnish some report on its condition as a road for traffic and a route for troops. From a range overlooking Herat he expects to obtain either a good photographic view, or, with the aid of a camera lucida, a good sketch of the city. That done, he turns east to the main road, and, on joining it, retraces his steps in a north-easterly direction to Kalah-i-nau, whence, if the weather and the authorities permit, he makes for the Tirband-i-Turkistan, where he hopes to find traces of coal. He states that the strata seen in the Paropamisus (Kaitu) range are such as are usually seen in the mountain-ranges of India overlying coal. Hitherto the geological features of the country we have passed through have held out no hopes of the existence of valuable mineral deposits, if we except some lead and antimony mines near Herat. The main party of the Survey and Intelligence, when they left us on the 24th ultimo, went to Kafir-Kilah and thence to Toman Aka, whence they commenced operations. Captain Peacocke, leaving the main party, travels viâ the Babar Pass, Kizil-bulak, Ak-rabat, and Hauz-i-Khan, to Bala Murghab, where he is timed to arrive on the 12th instant. He was last heard of at Kizil-bulak. The main party, consisting of Captains Gore and Maitland and Lieutenant the Honourable M. G. Talbot, are following in our wake, except that from Toman Aka they go straight to Chashma-Sabz, where we halted on the 29th ultimo, and were last heard of at Kara Bagh. They are timed to reach Bala Murghab on the 22d instant. The results of Captain Peacocke's survey will set at rest the question whether or not the country of Badkis has any adequate water-supply developed or capable of development.

Now for our own route. On the 27th the cavalry moved straight to Chashma-Sabz, while the infantry, taking their own water in *mussucks* and *pakhals*, halted half-way at Hauz-i-dak. It is one thing to call a place a *hauz*, and another to fill it with water. At this time of the year the bottom of the tank, which is of [illegible]

covered with a few inches or even a foot of water after heavy rain, is admirably adapted either for a polo-ground or a race-course. It was just like a billiard-table. However, had it contained some water it would have served our purpose better. *Apropos* of sports, I already hear proposals for polo and lawn-tennis at our winter-quarters; but first let us find the ground. Not a few of us also have skates, but we have yet to get the ice to bear. On the 26th the infantry rejoined the cavalry at Chashma-i-sabz, where there is certainly a small spring of water, but not that expanse of verdant turf which the name leads one to expect. The waterless gravelly tract between Kuhsan and Chashma-i-sabz produces a great quantity of asafœtida, the stalks and branches of which were strewn or standing everywhere, as well as those of some other umbelliferous plant. Chashma-i-sabz lies some 25 miles north-east of Kuhsan, under the southern slopes of the Paropamisus. Our march thence of about 11 miles over that range to Asiab-dev was very trying work for our camels. It is one of the stiffest passes I have seen for camels—not for its ruggedness, but for its prolonged steepness on both sides. I was surprised to find the Paropamisus range so insignificant. Yet on the 16th and 17th ultimo we saw snow lying on its slopes and peaks, remnants of which were found ensconced in shady nooks on the north side ten days later. From a high peak to the east of the pass a most extensive view of the surrounding country on every side was obtained. I think I am not exaggerating if I say that we could see to a distance of 100 miles in any direction: northwards to Pul-i-Khatun, Panjdeh, and Bala Murghab; west to the Jam range, beyond the Hari Rud, and up the broad valley traversed by the highroad from Herat to Mashhad; southward to distant ranges, so distant and so dim as to be barely discernible through a good field-glass; and eastward over the confused chaos of mountain-ranges grouped around and beyond Herat. The panorama lying before us to the north and north-west, between the Hari Rud and the Murghab and towards Panjdeh, presented not a single range of any importance—nothing but a vast expanse of undulations. Without entering into details, for

which my knowledge of the country does not at present qualify me, I may safely say that the future maps of Badkis, based on the survey now being made, will present very different features from those seen on the maps hitherto published. The vegetation on the north side of the Paropamisus presented a striking contrast to any we had seen before. Stunted junipers grow here and there on the steep slopes; and in the nullahs, wherever the water was near to or exuding from the soil, the bramble and other smaller plants familiar to the English eye were found growing. The spring-water that issues in countless streamlets from the slopes of the Paropamisus is as pure and delicious as mortal man can wish to drink. Those who long for better should become converts to the faith of Islam and make tracks from this transient world to the Prophet's paradise as soon as possible.

CAMP AU-SHARA, *9th December.*

After crossing the Paropamisus the general direction of our march was slightly north of east, the total distance from Kuhsan to Khushk being a little under 100 miles. In the list of marches of General Lumsden's party I have mentioned our first five marches (that from Kuhsan to Chashma-i-sabz being covered in two marches, as before mentioned). It remains to add the three last marches into Khushk:—

	Miles.
Tutuchi to Aftu, ...	15
Aftu to Ali-Kusa, ...	15
Ali-Kusa to Khushk, ...	16

Our march throughout led us over the northern spurs of the Paropamisus; and a more persistently uneven route I have seldom followed—up and down, up and down—sadly weary work for camels. And this infinity of undulations stretches for miles as far as the eye can see, assuming between Khushk and Kalah-i-nau even intensified proportions. The soil is excellent; and if the rainfall be plentiful, the seed brings forth fruit a hundredfold—so the natives declare. Now, however, it lies untilled, and yields nothing but pasture to such flocks as are brought to graze on it. About half-way be-

tween Asiab-dev and Karabagh we passed the now deserted "Ziarat-i-Baba-i-furkh," a clump of mulberries and a semi-ruined dome of sun-dried brick on the banks of a streamlet,—the tomb of the saint, surrounded by the graves of many pious Mohammedans who have sought and found here their last resting-place, lying on the summit of an adjacent hillock. Some of the tombstones of black and white marble there are well worthy of a visit. There, it is said, lie buried the Jagatais who built and tenanted the old fort at Karabagh, of which all that now remains are the mud-heaps that mark its double line of ramparts, and a slight depression in the ground indicating what was once a moat. It stands on a mound some 50 feet high, and in the centre of the keep is seen the mouth of the well, some two feet in diameter, which supplied the garrison with water. Throw down a small pebble, and it strikes the bottom in from three to four seconds. Forts and *ziarats*, with their attendant cemeteries, are the sole relics of the former denizens of this wasted tract. It must be admitted that the men of pious memory who tenanted the *ziarats*, showed in their selection of sites an artistic appreciation of the advantages and beauties of nature. Always by the side of a rippling stream of crystal water, sometimes in the sheltered precincts of a rock-bound vale, sometimes near an expanse of meadow rendered verdant by some perennial spring, they lived and died, and the willows which they planted in their lifetime have now attained a size but rarely equalled.

The evening we encamped at Karabagh, a Tekke Turkoman came in, a strange, wild-looking little creature, but self-possessed to a degree, and utterly unimpressed either by the novel sight of an Englishman or the dignity of a Boundary Commission. His apparent object in approaching us was to beg for our intervention on behalf of his wife and family, who, he stated, were detained at Merv by the Russians. His presence so far from Merv he thus explained: When Amir Abdur Rahman was an exile from his native land and a refugee in Turkistan, he met with considerable kindness at the hands of a Tekke of some position named Aziz Sardar. He

then promised his benefactor that if ever he sat on the throne of Kabul he would remember him. Accordingly, in 1881, Aziz Sardar, foreseeing the approaching annexation of the Tekke country by the Russians, repaired to Kabul, and was rewarded by the gift of lands on the northern slopes of the Paropamisus west of Rabat-i-sangi. To this spot he emigrated, accompanied by a following of some twenty retainers, who have since found occupation in cultivating their newly acquired property. It appears, however, that later on, when they sent for their families to join them, the Russians, who had by that time annexed Merv, declined to let them go, hoping doubtless that such a course would induce the emigrants to return to the home of their fathers. Our Tekke seemed perfectly familiar with the name of Mr O'Donovan, but whether he actually saw him at Kala-i-Kaushid-Khan I cannot say.

Some three miles beyond Karabagh we crossed a stream of salt or brackish water, near which the Afghan officials, with becoming consideration, had originally proposed to encamp us. Thanks, however, to the precaution taken of sending on a native *attaché*, Subadar Mahomed Husain, one march ahead to report on the state of the road, water, distances, supplies, &c., we were spared the infliction of having to drink water which even our horses would hardly touch. The supplies were moved to Karabagh. Just above where we crossed the Shura Rud, its waters collect on a broad level expanse of ground which is thus transformed into an extensive marsh, overgrown with reeds seven or eight feet high. Among these reeds, where the receding waters had left the ground dry, were the lairs and pathways of some species of wild beast. As neither the trodden-down reeds nor the banks presented a single discernible track, it was impossible to say what the animals were: probably pig. The leopard keeps to the hills and precipitous defiles, and the tiger is said not to haunt this particular region. A native, however, assured me he had, two years ago, seen four camels killed by a tiger lying dead in the jungle near Shabash, between Ghorian and Kuhsan; but as he admitted he had not seen the destroyer, his evidence

must be considered unsatisfactory. The jungles of the Hari Rud thereabouts are now scarcely dense enough for the hiding-place of the tiger, although Ferrier states that in 1845 it was the lurking-place and hunting-ground of many carnivorous animals. The leopard appears to inflict considerable loss on the owners of camels and cattle: rarely, they say, does it touch a goat or sheep; it scorns such puny prey. Its thirst for blood can only be quenched by a long deep draught from the throat of a camel or an ox, an *uriyal* (mountain sheep), or an antelope. That of a goat or sheep is but as a drop in a bucket to a beast that is devoured with an insatiable thirst for blood, and casts aside untouched the carcass whose life-blood he has sucked to the very last drop.

It is among the spurs of the Kuh-i-Kaitu that one first sees, though few and far between, the pistachio-tree, which, farther to the north-east, exists in countless myriads. They are trees of no stature, rarely attaining the height of 15 feet, and yet in the branches of one we found the nest of a very large bird of prey, probably an eagle—a nest some three feet high and three feet in diameter, the accumulation of years, the home of many broods or even generations of eaglets. What a proof of the utter desolation of this tract! A bird that seeks the most inaccessible cliffs as the nursery of its offspring here rears them in a home that the passer-by can touch with his hand from the ground. And yet the peasant has but to furrow the hillside and throw in his grain in spring, and then falls the life-giving rain, and in autumn a crop proportionate to the extent of the rain-fall is reaped. It will be not uninteresting to watch the gradual settlement and cultivation of this tract, now that the Turkoman is under the Russian thumb, and that the definition of a "strong frontier," and the possible establishment of a stable Government in Afghanistan, is apparently within a measurable distance. At the north-east extremity of a hill near our camp at Tutuchi stood the four walls and bastions of the old fort of that name, a fort said to have been occupied by Persian settlers during the reign in Afghanistan of Mahmud Shah, son of the great Ahmed Shah Abdali.

Between Tutuchi and Aftu, some of us, instead of following the route taken by the escort and baggage, made a circuit southwards towards the Paropamisus, visiting the Ziarat-i-Khwaja Sasposh, a lonely tomb in a rocky ravine. The enthusiastic picture drawn by our guide of the verdant beauty of this spot proved a marked contrast to the reality. Presumably he had last visited the place in spring or in summer, when the stream, lately swollen by melting snows, and aided by the rainfall, had encouraged the grass and vegetation to peer above the soil, and when the trees (locally called *takhun*) around the tomb were covered with leaves and blossoms. But at the end of November neither leaf nor blade of grass was visible. Over the grave, covered with loose stones and girt around by high walls of the same material, stretched the sombre naked boughs of the *takhun*, while above all lowered dark rugged cliffs. So infested with *chikore* were these rocks that one could only suppose that the departed Khwaja Sasposh was as keen a supporter of the game-laws as any J.P. and D.L. of an English county. Possibly he kept up a *chikore* farm, and annually invited the neighbouring Shaikhs and Khwajas to a battue. If he could but have seen us poaching on his preserves! We made a very respectable bag, and then wended our way north-eastwards past the old fort of Siyah-Kumruk and the *jagir* of Aziz Sardar, at Kushauri (where the only signs of life were a small tower and a few *gizhdis* or blanket-tents), and another ancient fort, nameless, with an extensive cemetery hard by, to our camp at Aftu. Here we found ourselves in a small valley of unusual breadth for this country—a valley down which flowed a stream of some size, and in which could be traced the lines of several old *karezes*. North of Aftu the valley widens still more, and is dignified by the name of Dasht-i-Faizabad. One of our Jamshidi guides gave us a vivid account of a fight that took place at this very spot about three years ago between a body of Turkoman raiders and a party of Afghan and Jamshidi horse sent out from Herat to repel them. The Turkomans (Tekkes) are said to have numbered 400 horse and 500 footmen. It is not generally supposed that the Turkomans raid on foot;

however, I repeat what I was told. The Herati force, numbering some 300 horsemen, charged as soon as they sighted the enemy. The Turkoman infantry promptly sought refuge on the top of a neighbouring, and, to cavalry, inaccessible height. The Turkoman horsemen appear to have likewise sought safety in flight. In the pursuit, however, some 40 of them were captured, brought back to Aftu, and there put to death in cold blood. A passive critic may be disposed to condemn such an act as a brutal murder only worthy of the "Reign of Terror." If he does, let him go at once to his bookseller's, or a circulating library, and procure a copy of some oriental traveller, say "Haji Baba" or Ferrier, and read in his pages an account of the merciless brutality of the Turkomans. Ten to one he will then pronounce the verdict "serve them right." After this feat the Herati horse returned to their houses, leaving the Tekke footmen on the top of their hill. One wonders, perhaps, that they did not extend a cordon of sentries round the hill, and send a messenger to Herat for reinforcements. The fact is that, owing to the nature of the ground, such a measure would have been comparatively useless, and attended with considerable danger to the besiegers. The Turkomans, perhaps with the loss of two or three men, and having inflicted greater loss on their foes, would, aided by the darkness and the intricate nature of the country, have escaped into the waterless wilds farther north —wilds in which they alone, it is said, know where to find water.

On the 1st December we marched from Aftu to Ali-Kusa. The road taken by the baggage and escort ran close past the old fort of Du-ab, which is situated on the banks of the same streamlet, near which, four or five miles to the south, stand the remains of the old fort and settlement of Rabat-i-sangi. Although the steepness of the gradients renders most of the innumerable bypaths of this rugged country—which, viewed from a commanding height, looks like nothing more than a sea of gigantic earthen billows—impassable for laden camels, a man on horseback or on foot can find his way anywhere. For those who wished to break the monotony of the march by

visiting some of the landmarks of the history of Badkis, or trying his luck after the antelope, this was a decided convenience. For those who preferred *shikar*, our Jamshidi escort provided experienced *shikaris*, and for those of historical or antiquarian bent the same corps furnished guides. Some four or five miles south-east of Aftu may be seen the ruined fort and the *ziarat* of Khwaja Kasim. The fort is said to have been built and occupied by a settlement of Kurds, whose mortal remains lie interred round the tomb of the sainted personage by whose name this spot is known. The peak of the Paropamisus overhanging it is also called "Kuh-i-Khwaja Kasim." Between Herat and Gulran the course of this route is marked by the ruined caravanserais of Chughur-rabat, Kush-rabat, Rabat-i-Mirza (near the summit of the pass over the hills, just west of the Ardawan Pass), Rabat-i-sangi, and Gulran. The principal sections of the mountain-range that separates the Hari Rud valley from Badkis are known locally, from east to west, as Band-i-Zarmast, Band-i-Baba, Band-i-Ardawan, Band-i-Afzal, and Band-i-Kaitu. Some four miles east of Rabat-i-sangi lies the Ziarat-i-Khwaja Mallal, a picturesque little spot, with its clear rippling stream full of small fish, fringed by grassy banks, and overshadowed by enormous storm-battered willows, whose huge trunks lie, bent seemingly by some mighty wind that rages here, across the bed of the stream, damming its current. In the stream grew a profusion of water-weeds, at a distance the facsimile of water-cress, but on closer inspection found to be not the genuine article. A dozen tiny springs bubble up out of the soil here, transforming the arid soil into grassy meadow. Many of the willows had two, or even three trunks, one of which maybe Nature had permitted to grow upright, while the other or others lay prone, but not void of vitality, on the ground. The tomb on a mound hard by was the least interesting feature of the scene. Some four miles east of this *ziarat* we entered the road which connects Herat and Khushk *via* the Ardawan Pass. By this road, it is said, some two years ago two batteries of artillery on wheeled carriages marched to Khushk, and thence either through or close by

Kalah-i-nau to Bala Murghab and Maimena. These batteries are now at Bala Murghab. Our camp at Ali-Kusa lay about half a mile off this road to the north, in a narrow stony valley, down which flowed the largest stream we had seen since we left the banks of the Hari Rud. As I have before remarked, the traces of old *karezes* and irrigation channels may be seen in almost every valley of any size, and running along the slopes of the hill parallel to every stream, proving that the old inhabitants did not rely entirely on the rainfall. At this season of the year the tops and slopes of these spurs are covered with but a scant coat of dried yellow grass, affording but poor grazing. We not unfrequently observed dense columns of smoke rising in the distance, indicating that the shepherds were firing the grass. In spring, when rain and melting snows have fertilised the soil and transformed this now yellow undulating expanse into a wavy carpet of green, the panorama presented thereby will be such as the eye seldom, in Central Asia at least, surveys. Doubtless we shall be here to see this transformation-scene. Leaving Ali-Kusa on the 2d December, we crossed for some four miles or more a succession of spurs presenting unusually steep gradients and break-neck slopes. Steep ascents and descents are usually attended by no graver evil than the readjusting of loads; but when 1300 camels have to wind in single file round the almost precipitous side of a hill along a narrow footpath, where a slip would send camel and load rolling to the bottom, it becomes rather ticklish work, especially when a lot of impatient and somewhat quarrelsome *sarwans* (camel-drivers) have to be dealt with. Any accident causing a halt all along the line is apt to produce a mishap. No mishap, however, occurred; and once free of these wearisome ups and downs, our road led us down a broadish valley by the side of a stream rippling away to meet the Khushk Rud. About four miles down this valley, just above the junction of this stream with another, stands the *ziarat* and ruined fort of Lag-lag-Khana. The site of the fort, commanded as it was from a higher point of the very spur on which it was constructed, is not such as usually finds favour with the turbulent Oriental,

be he Turk or Afghan, Persian or Hindu. The *ziarat*, thanks no doubt to its proximity to Khushk, was in a fair state of repair, and thousands of graves covered the surrounding slopes. In the *ziarat* itself, which was enclosed by a wall of large square burnt bricks, were, in addition to the principal tomb, which was overshadowed by pistachio-trees, and decorated with some very fine *uriyal* horns and a pair of *barasinga* antlers, several minor tombs, each with its white marble headstone bearing inscriptions in Arabic and Persian. Mohammedan monumental inscriptions are not characterised by that simplicity which marks those of Christian tombs; but seemingly in this case the mantle of poverty and piety had descended from father to son through three or four generations. On the banks of the stream below the *ziarat* stood a forlorn, uncared-for *masjid*, built, so said an inscription on its walls, in the year of the Hijra 1240, by Abu Bakr, son of Abd-ul-Aziz, one of those buried in the *ziarat* above. None of these monuments dated further back than the year 1200 of the Hijra. Following the stream above mentioned to within a mile of its point of junction with the Khushk, the road turns abruptly eastward over a high spur and descends into the Khushk valley. After eight days of sojourn in an uninhabited land, it is a surprise (I cannot say an agreeable surprise; for mud-pigsties and uncouth *khirgahs*, or felt-covered shanties, are not attractive to the eye) to come suddenly on all the activity of settled though not civilised human life.

BALA MURGHAB, 12th December.

Here we are, and here we winter. Long marches in an intricate country, short winter days and cold nights, have of late proved adverse to writing. My next letter will describe Khushk and our march thence to this place.

BALA MURGHAB, 15th December.

I can confidently say that when, on the 12th instant, we arrived on the banks of the Murghab, and heard that there we were to winter, there was not one of us, from the highest to the lowest, that did not confess, whether to himself or to

his neighbour, his complete satisfaction. Till then our future had been uncertain, and that very uncertainty enhanced the gladness with which we received the tidings of a well-earned rest. Some said Chahar Shamba, some said Bala Murghab would be the site of our winter camp. There was even a vague rumour that we should continue our wanderings until the inclemency of the weather necessitated a stationary existence. The last report however, originated, I have little doubt, in a misapprehension. It is true that the Survey and Intelligence parties will continue on the move as long as possible: I even heard Major Holdich offer to bet that his parties would not suspend their labour for more than a fortnight throughout the winter; and from what we have as yet experienced of the weather, I am disposed to think he would have won his bet had any bold man taken it up. But any intention of keeping the whole Commission on the march all the winter was long ago abandoned, certainly as soon as it was found that the Russian Commission had failed to put in an appearance. The mail news of the 24th ultimo states that "the Russian Government is not disposed to show itself accommodating about the Afghan frontier question. They insist that the line fixed in 1872 should be taken as the basis of the new delimitation. If they do not succeed in obtaining this, they are anxious that the arrangement should not have a final character." This is altogether a somewhat curious and contradictory announcement. In the first place, what should be the basis of the new delimitation if not the line fixed, or rather, it would appear, not fixed, in 1872? Considering that the Russian Government has been generally understood of late to claim very much more than what was conceded to it in 1872, most people will admit that its now professed willingness to recognise the validity of the 1872 settlement is a signal proof of an accommodating tendency. It might be supposed that the quotation which I make above from the mail news refers to the more easterly portion of the Afghan frontier—viz., Badakhshan, Wakhan, and Shignan. I have, however, good authority for stating that as yet the frontier eas[t] of Khoja Saleh has not been brought on the *tapis*, and tha[t]

the British and Russian Cabinets are at present only concerned with the frontier from Sarakhs to *Khoja Saleh*. Recent indications of Russian policy, however, *by no means* lead me to suppose that the aims of that Government *are by* any means so modest as the statement of the St Petersburg correspondent would imply. There is little doubt that the Russian bear is already stretching forth its avaricious paws towards Panjdeh, and already savouring the sweetness of hugging that home of the Saruks in a tenacious and fatal embrace—fatal, indeed, for the British policy in Central Asia. I may here add that the Afghans are now busily engaged in repairing the ruined defences of Ak-tapa, six miles north-west of Panjdeh and of Maruchak.

General Lumsden's party arrived here the same day as we did—viz., the 12th. They had taken it very easily between Panjdeh and this, halting at Maruchak for two days' pheasant-shooting. The banks of the Murghab simply swarm with the bird of lovely plumage (differing, however, somewhat from the English pheasant), called by the Turkoman *[illegible]*, and by the Persian *murgh-i-dashti* (heath-cock). As in the English pheasant, the plumage of the hen is vastly inferior to that of the cock-bird. In a few days some three or four guns bagged 300 birds, and they estimated that they lost a number very little inferior in the thick jungle. Sir Peter Lumsden's arrival here was heralded by a salute of seventeen guns, fired from the four guns in the fort. The river here winds about very much—so much so that, although both the fort and our camp are on the right bank, the stream twice cuts the bee-line between us. The fort is about three-quarters of a mile south of our camp, while half a mile to the east of us lies the camp of the Afghan Commissioner. The Governor of Herat and General Ghaus-ud-din are lodged in the fort. The latter returns to Panjdeh shortly. The plan of our camp, worked out, I believe, with much care and [illegible] at Simla, has of late undergone a complete transformation—why or wherefore I know not, nor need we discuss here the respective advantages of the past and present arrangements. Looking south from our camp we see [illegible]

eight miles, a narrow gorge through which flows the Murghab. This gorge pierces the western extremity of the Tirband-i-Turkistan.

The Commissioner's party, after diverging from our route at Tutuchi, struck the Khushk at Kara-tapa. In the valley of that river they had some exciting pig-sticking, killing four huge boars. The day we marched in from Mangan here, we saw a sounder making off up the hills west of the river. The pigs of the Khushk valley seem also to have generally made for the hills when in danger. A similar habit characterises the pigs of Beluchistan, and, in fact, any locality where rugged hills afford a safer refuge than scant jungle. Between Aushara and Tur-i-Shaikh, on the 10th instant, in a valley occupied by settlements of nomad Afghans (Tokhis and Utaks from near Kandahar) we were shown a large boar killed that morning by the inhabitants. He had killed a camel, and ere he departed this life very seriously gored a man. He was measured, and found to stand 37 inches at the shoulder, and to be 67 inches from nose to root of tail. However, let us retrace our steps and rejoin General Lumsden in the Khushk valley. Twice between Kara-tapa and Pul-i-khishti the waters of the river disappear (viz., between Chaman-i-bed and Hauz-i-Khan and a few miles above Pul-i-khishti) for a space, reappearing farther down. This seems to be a characteristic feature of the rivers and streams of Afghanistan and Beluchistan, and doubtless also of other countries of similar geological formation. Witness the Hari Rud near Sarakhs, the Farah Rud at Lash Juwain, the streams in the Bolan and Hurnai valleys, and many more. The general aspect of the country through which General Lumsden's party marched appears to have closely resembled that of the route which we followed, with this exception, that the everlasting undulations were less varied by rugged defiles and hill-ranges, and that the willow, juniper, and pistachio trees were conspicuous by their absence. And this is precisely the character which any man viewing the land from the top of the Kuh-i-Kaitu would have attributed to it. The bridge near the junction of the Khushk and Murghab rivers, known

as Pul-i-khishti, proves to be an aqueduct by which copious stream of water drawn off from the Murghal Band-i-Nadiri, about half-way between Maruchak and Pa deh, is carried across the bed of the Khushk to irrigate lar farther north on the left bank of the Murghab. Pul khishti consists of three arches. Like the bridges at Pu i-Khatun, Maruchak, and Tirpul, it is constructed mainly c large, square, kiln-dried bricks, the material apparently inva riably used for building in olden days in these parts, where building-stone is unprocurable. It is still utilised as a via-duct, whereas that of Maruchak has little left but the piers.

Sir Peter Lumsden reached Ak-tapa on the 2d December, and halted there on the 3d. Ak-tapa is a vast mound, said to be some 300 yards long by 150 broad and 100 feet high; in fact, I should think, not unlike the citadel of old Kandahar. Such mounds, relics of this country's former populousness and prosperity, are to be seen at several places on the banks of the Khushk; and yet now one or two small isolated settlements of Saruk Turkomans, and those but recently detached from Panjdeh, are alone to be seen there. Ak-tapa itself is garrisoned and being fortified by the Afghan troops under General Ghaus-ud-din. It is surrounded by extensive ruins.

On the 4th General Lumsden moved to Panjdeh, halted there on the 5th and 6th, reached Maruchak in two marches on the 8th, halted there on the 9th and 10th, and on the 12th encamped at Bala Murghab. The marches and distances are as under:—

	Miles.
Ak-tapa to Panjdeh, ...	5.65
Panjdeh to Band-i-Nadiri, ...	11.75
Band-i-Nadiri to Maruchak, ...	10.95
Maruchak to Karawulkhana, ...	12.55
Karawulkhana to Bala Murghab, ...	10.75
Total, ...	51.65

The survey of the route from Kuhsan to Panjdeh and thence to Bala Murghab, executed under the su Major Holdich, was made by traversing—the certain important points

vations. The following figures show the correct position three important points, and illustrate the errors of the po tions assigned to them on previous maps :—

		As now on map.	As fixed by Major Holdich.	Difference.
Old Panjdeh, old Fort,	Lat.	36° 4′ 30″	35° 58′ 48″	− 5′ 42″
	Long. E.	62 38 0	62 50 30	+12 30
Maruchak Fort,	Lat.	35 47 30	35 49 39	+ 2 9
	Long. E.	62 44 0	63 9 30	+25 30
Bala Murghab Fort,	Lat.	35 31 0	35 35 29	+ 4 29
	Long. E.	63 8 0	63 21 30	+13 30

The real distance of Maruchak from Karawulkhana is doubled in our present maps. These are merely instances of the great inaccuracy of the geographical knowledge of Badkis, and of the importance of the survey now being executed from a scientific point of view. The strategical results of this survey, as illustrating the relative positions of the Russian forces in Turkistan and the British forces in India towards Herat, will be of greater practical moment. There is no town of Panjdeh, the Saruks being scattered up and down the valley in settlements of varying size. They reside in tents of coarse felt and blanketing, known locally as *khirgah*, and more universally by the name of *kibitka*. They are both cultivators of the soil and owners of large flocks and herds. Their carpets (*kalins*), saddle-bags (*khurjins*), and other articles of similar manufacture, are known all over Asia, and in Europe also, for their excellence of workmanship and tastefulness of design. They are mostly made of sheep's wool, but occasionally patches of silk-work are inserted.

The silver-work of the Saruks, both for horse-trappings and for the fairer sex, is said to vie with their carpet-work for beauty of design and workmanship. I have as yet seen none except the horse-trappings which are used by all men of any rank among the Jamshidis and Hazaras, and which did not strike me as remarkable. Part of the work is silver-gilt. The only stone used is cornelian apparently. The artisans are the women of the tribe. The male Saruk being happily free of that bigotry and jealousy which induces most Moham-

medans to keep their women in the strictest seclusion, the curious Briton was permitted to enter their wigwams and witness the process of manufacture of the carpets. In a few days, probably, we shall see a large consignment of these wares brought into our camp for sale.

The Afghan garrison in the neighbourhood of Panjdeh is roughly estimated at 1000 men, with two guns. It has been increased lately, owing to apprehensions arising from recent Russian movements. Some 30 miles north of Ak-tapa is an Afghan outpost. The settlements of the Saruks extend to Karawulkhana, 13 miles this side of Maruchak, which, with the exception of a small Afghan garrison busied in repairing the old citadel, is but sparsely inhabited. The old town of Maruchak was of some size and importance, as shown by its ruined walls, which enclose an area of nearly half a mile, and the dimensions of its citadel. The bridge, whose arches once spanned the Murghab there, is now a complete ruin. Above its centre pier may still be seen the ruins of a watch-tower or fortified gateway. From Panjdeh General Lumsden marched up the left bank of the river to Maruchak, crossed it by a ford near the bridge, and thence followed the right bank to Bala Murghab. Just this side of Karawulkhana the settlements of the Saruks and the Jamshidis almost meet. The whole valley is eminently fertile, and capable of being highly cultivated. The average breadth of the valley of the Murghab from here to Panjdeh, between the undulating hills that bound it east and west, is three or four miles. There is one feature about the Murghab river which eminently distinguishes it from almost all other rivers that I have seen in Asia, and that is, that the volume of the water, whether in flood, or, as at this season, when it is at its lowest ebb, fills the same breadth of channel. As a rule, an Asiatic river-bed presents at the close of the dry season a wide extent of mud, stone, or gravel, which is submerged during and after rainfall or snow melting. The Murghab alters only in the depth of its waters, not in the breadth as a rule, because it flows in a confined channel, with perpendicular sides, that has been excavated by the action of the river itself. It is scarcely

husbandman's labours. About the amount and method of payment of their revenue, there is some doubt. Some said they render to the Amir annually a camel for every flock of 500 sheep. Others again stated that one sheep in forty per annum was the assessed revenue. It comes to much the same thing, as the value of a good baggage-camel and of 20 sheep may both be put down roughly at about Rs. 60, or perhaps rather more.

However, I must hie back to Khushk. Our road joined the stream of that name near the point where its course, hitherto westerly, bends northward. This same point, where it passes through a precipitous defile in an offshoot of the Baba range, is also the boundary between the populated and depopulated portion of its course. Northward, as it flows to join the Murghab, ruins and a few tents of Saruks, as I before mentioned, are the sole signs of human life. Eastward its banks are a very beehive, or rather a swarm of beehives—for I know no structure that in shape, if not in colour, more closely resembles the *khirgah* or *kibitka.* Not that all the dwellings are of this type. The majority are low flat-roofed mud-hovels, so low that no human being of ordinary stature could stand up in them. On the roof of each was stacked a goodly pile of dried lucerne grass (*beda*) for the winter-fodder of the householder's nag. However, humble as is his dwelling, the Jamshidi is as a rule a good sort of fellow, and invariably a good horseman. Like the Turkoman, he is trained to ride from infancy, as are all the Chahar Aimaks. It were indeed a pity that we should place at the disposal of the Russians this fine body of irregular cavalry. Rather let us retain them in our own service as a counterpoise to the Turkomans, whom the Russians are already utilising.

From our camp at Aukamari some of us rode over to Kalah-i-nau. In the bazaar there we lost our guide, and on the way back we lost our road. A cold night under the firmament stared us in the face. A Hazara, one of the ugliest men I ever saw—he had a face closely resembling the fiendish Fenian dynamitard with whom 'Punch's' cartoons have made

us all familiar—came across our path. *Nolens volens* we impressed him into our service, and insisted on his showing us the way to our camp. As we rode along I conversed with him. He told me he was a poor herdsman, without house, wife, or family—one who dwelt with the flock intrusted to him under the canopy of heaven. Yet he had a steed—such a steed!—almost uglier than its rider, yet still distinctly recognisable as a scion, however fallen, of the equine race. Every Jamshidi who can possibly afford it keeps a steed of sorts. All those in the Amir's service are horsemen, and good horsemen to boot.

The Saruks of Panjdeh are said to be exceedingly well to do. What is the source of their wealth? Their carpets, *numdahs*, and silver-work, their flocks, herds, and crops? So it would seem, for one does not hear their name coupled with that of the Tekkes as inveterate robbers. Indeed their position at Panjdeh, easy of approach and attack as it is, would scarcely warrant their adopting a life of indiscriminate plunder. The Jamshidi again, while leading a life of industry, has from force of necessity been trained from childhood to live face to face with danger. On one side the Turkoman raider; on the other the Afghan, to whom the Chahar Aimak have not always been the most docile subjects; and on the third, neighbouring tribes not precisely of a peaceable temperament: who would not like to live in the middle?

The Khushk valley, from the capital town to Khwaja Kalandar, where our road diverged to the north towards Kalah-i-nau, is, following its windings, some 14 miles in length, with an average breadth of about half a mile. Throughout this distance both its banks are studded more or less thickly with villages of the type I have already described. We had some good fishing in the Khushk. Our only rod took 50 in an hour. The string and crooked pin with a lump of dough was also an eminent success. The bazaar, such as it is, is in Khushk itself near the tumble-down fort, where reside the chief's family. Haidar Kuli Khan, the eldest son of Khan Aga, came in from Herat during our halt of two days, and paid Colonel Ridgeway a visit. Our second day there was a fair-day, and we all

patrolled the bazaar in the hopes that we should witness a grand display of the products and wares of the country. We were all egregiously disappointed, and only tempted into expending our hardly earned rupees on articles many of which we could buy cheaper in the bazaars of Shikarpur and Peshawar. The sheepskin hat of the country was the most original object I saw—and even those we were induced to buy off the heads of the owners, who made at least cent per cent on the bargain. I may as well add that these hats were carefully steamed and fumigated before they were used, or even allowed admittance into a tent. They are splendid things to keep the head warm on a cold day. It is curious how Orientals feel cold affecting their heads. Not long ago, in the chill of the early morn, before marching I saw a native *attaché* looking unquestionably cold and miserable. I expressed a fear that he was suffering from the cold. "No," he replied, "I am not; but my head is." Now with the European it is the hands and feet that suffer most.

The valley of the Khushk is all either under cultivation or lying fallow; and the tops and slopes, and dips and hollows, of the hills bordering on it, are by no means neglected. Indeed the natives say that the soil of the latter, which is irrigated by rain only, and known as *daima*, is far more productive in a good year than the former. Wheat, barley, and melons seem to be most generally grown here, although cotton, and I hear opium, are also cultivated, especially near Kalah-i-nau. The manufactures seem barely worthy of mention. Sheepskin hats are the only things I can think of. At Kalah-i-nau, however, very good *kurk* and *barak* are made.[1] Almost everything is imported: piece-goods from Russia, and a variety of articles made of silk, cotton, wool, and felt from Mashhad, Panjdeh, and Bokhara. Other things, such as metal utensils of all kinds, and articles of food, are probably

[1] *Kurk* and *barak* are materials of a thick warm substance, made from the hair of goats and camels. Each web is about 9 yards long by 2 feet broad. The price varies, according to quality, from one to two or three rupees a yard. It makes excellent warm clothing. The escort of the Boundary Commission was provided with clothing of this material for the winter of 1884-85.

obtained from Herat. English wares would certainly appear to be almost unknown in these markets.[1] What I say of Khushk applies equally to Kalah-i-nau. It seems radically wrong that in Northern Afghanistan, as well as in Central Asia, Russian wares should be supplanting English. Within Russian territory the prohibitive duties imposed leave not a chance to British or Indian competition; but it is time we reciprocated by beating them out of the Afghan market. One web of tweed or cheviot or some such cloth, and some Manchester cotton goods stamped Ralli Brothers, were the only wares I saw that must have reached Khushk and Kalah-i-nau through India. Sugar comes from Russia, tea probably from Bokhara. Russian leather (*bulghar*) and Russian-made boots I saw, also Turkoman boots. Carpets, *numdahs,* and silver-work come from Panjdeh. The Turkoman *namads* (felt rugs) are very good, but the best are those of Mashhad. The carpets of Birjand and Ghain, however, cannot hold a candle to those of Panjdeh. Aniline dyes, which played such havoc among Persian carpets that the Shah had to issue a *firman* forbidding their use under pain of heavy penalty, are happily little known as yet to the Turkomans. I regret to hear that they are just creeping into use among them.

Among the curiosities of Khushk are its saline and chalybeate springs. One, which I did not visit personally, is said to produce a chalybeate fluid with the sparkle and fizz of soda-water. Two others, however, I saw; and from the appearance of the sediment deposited by them and the taste of the water, I concluded that they contained both iron and salt. These springs had in the course of ages deposited, or rather thrown up, two small mounds some 15 or 20 feet high, composed apparently of a composition of salt and iron.[2] One lay just below the town of Khushk on the left bank of the river,

[1] Recent statistical reports show that since 1863 the value of Russian exports to Persia, Turkistan, and Afghanistan has increased £1,000,000; while since 1880-81 the value of exports from the Panjab to Central Asia has decreased six laks of rupees (£50,000).

[2] Yavorski, in his account of Stolietoff's Mission to Kabul in 1878-79, mentions a similar spring and formation at Gardan-diwal, about 50 miles west of Kabul.

and the other just opposite to it on the right bank. While the former was left out in the cold and invested with no halo of sanctity, the latter was reputed to be the place of martyrdom of a descendant of the Imam Reza, by name Imamzada Sher Mohammed. Hard by was his tomb, named Ziarat-i-shir-i-surkh, or the shrine of the red milk, planted as usual with pistachios and adorned with the horns of the mountain sheep. On a rocky eminence overhanging both spring and tomb, stood a little dome of mud-bricks of a very strikingly red hue. This was termed the holy man's "Kadam-gah," or standing-place; but it appeared that he had not left his footprint embedded in the rock, as saints, and devils also I am told, are wont to do. The red soil of which this dome was constructed is not, as may be supposed, coloured with iron. It is not to be seen anywhere near the chalybeate springs, although I remarked its existence in several parts of the Khushk valley. I may here incidentally mention that one of the strata of the hills bordering the river was composed mainly of fossilised marine shells. How Sher Mohammed Imamzada came by his martyrdom I could not ascertain. However, the water of the spring, which, albeit white enough to look at, leaves a red deposit not unlike dry clotted blood, is said to be his blood, and is revered accordingly. An ill-timed question whether the water contained iron was received by the *mujawir* (resident fakir in charge) with contemptuous silence. We were instructed to apply our ears to a small orifice; and doing so, could hear the water bubbling beneath the crust of the curious brittle hollow-sounding dome that the spring has constructed over itself. Some day Khushk will be a fashionable spa frequented by enervated persons in search of a tonic, and then the guardians of the Red-milk fountain will have a rise in the world. And for those whose ailments demand a warm sulphur-bath, hydropathic establishments will be instituted at Mangan and Tur-i-Shaikh, between Kalah-i-nau and this place. The great half-subterraneous brick dome or domed tank near the source of the sulphur-springs at Tur-i-Shaikh, is thought by some to have been used in olden days for hydropathic treatment. ...ce con-

tained water is evident from the stains on the brick sides; and considering that a copious stream of fresh water flows within a quarter of a mile of it, it is impossible to believe that this warm sulphur-water was stored for drinking. These sulphur-springs were tenanted by some small fish, and also by curious black water-beetles with wonderful powers of diving, and whose frequent bolts to the surface of the water seemed to imply that a periodical draught of air was essential to their existence.

The following is a list of our marches from Khushk to Bala Murghab Fort:—

Date.		Stage.	Distance. Miles.
Dec.	5.	Khushk to Khwaja Kalandar, . . .	12
„	6.	Khwaja Kalandar to Kokchail, . .	13
„	7.	Kokchail to Padda-i-Kach, . . .	6
„	8.	Padda-i-Kach to Aukamari, . . .	11
„	9.	Aukamari to Au-shara, ...	16
„	10.	Au-shara to Tur-i-Shaikh, . . .	20
„	11.	Tur-i-Shaikh to Mangan, ...	15
„	12.	Mangan to bank of Murghab, . . .	15
„	13.	Bank of Murghab to Bala Murghab Fort, .	3
		Total, ...	111

We followed the Khushk valley eastward to Khwaja Kalandar, and there leaving it, turned northward over the Kotal-i-Zinda-hasham, a pass that sorely tried our camels, into the Hazara country. From the top of the pass we had a magnificent view of all the country round to Kalah-i-nau, the valley of the Murghab, Kuh-i-Naraitu, Band-i-Baba, &c. Northward, below us, stretched the tract known as "Pistalik," miles of undulating hills thickly covered with pistachios. There were hundreds of thousands of them, no-man's property (mal-i-Khuda, God's property, said the guide). No revenue is paid for them, and he who likes gathers them. They yield fruit every second year, I understand, each tree producing, to use my informant's expression, a small saddle-bag full. If such be the case, the total yield must be enormous. A yellow dye is also obtained from it. I noticed these trees in gradually diminishing numbers as far as and beyond Kalah-i-nau.

Their disappearance or rarity in the more populous parts must be attributed to their being cut for firewood, an article that is unpleasantly scarce hereabouts. On the Kotal-i-Zinda-hasham were a number of rather fine junipers. Immediately below the Kotal, which is the boundary between the Jamshidi and Hazara territory, lay ensconced in snug little vales two or three Hazara villages, composed mostly of *khirgahs*. The only tree I noticed in the Jamshidi and Hazara villages was the poplar (*padda*). It appears to be cultivated, not indigenous. In a more open valley some eight or nine miles distant, a few tents, just recognisable through a field-glass, indicated our camping-ground at Kokchail. Rain fell in the afternoon. A number of Mushwani Pathans, who lead a combined pastoral and manufacturing existence among these hills, came into our camp with coarse carpets, *khurjins*, and *numdahs* for sale.

The next two marches, between Kokchail and Aukamari, were full of difficulties. For roads we had the choice of rugged rocky defiles and very steep gradients. From Padda-i-Kach to Aukamari we followed three roads: one through a defile along the bed of a torrent, taken by the infantry and cavalry; the second over the hills to the right of the defile, allotted to the camels as presenting the easiest gradients; and the third, over the hills to the left, was assigned to the mule transport. We passed a number of Hazara villages and acres of *daima*, and the hills were covered with [illegible]. The people here store their grain and winter-fodder for their cattle in pits in the ground. Perhaps they could give us a wrinkle or two about ensilage. Our camp was pitched on a grassy sward known as Sar-i-chashma-i-Aukamari (Aukamari spring), the village, or rather villages, being situated three or four miles lower down the valley. The water is unpleasantly tainted with some mineral property. Here Mohammed Khan, Nizam-ud-daulah, chief of the Hazaras, attended by several hundred horse, met Colonel Ridgeway and escorted him to Kalah-i-nau, where he spent the night in one of the *khilkas* furnished by the Hazaras for our [illegible] We saw 50 standing there ready to be [illegible] Not

a few of us rode over to Kalah-i-nau on the afternoon of the 8th, and others of us on the following day. The distance is about eight miles through a very undulating bit of country. From the top of a *kotal* about half-way we had a splendid view of the Kotal-i-zarmast, and the mountains of the same range east and west. The upper slopes of this range on the northern side were clad in a thick belt of juniper (*archa*). The standard which accompanied the Nizam-ud-daulah was some five or six feet square, and made of magenta silk, with a green border of the same material, and magenta and green fringe. It is known by the name of Karabash or Black-head, from the black tassel at its peak. The fringe of the *ghajari*, or saddle-cloth, used by the Khan and his retinue, was also invariably of the same hues. Some seven or eight years ago, when Grodekoff rode from Balkh to Herat *viâ* Kalah-i-nau, the present Khan was at Kabul with Amir Sher Ali—Mahmud Khan, now at Kabul with Amir Abdur Rahman, being the head of the tribe. The present Khan is a man of from forty to fifty years of age, and of pleasing appearance, address, and manners. His town lies in the centre of a good-sized valley, and is constructed mainly of sun-dried brick. At the head of the valley is a large village of *kibitkas*. The entire population of the valley is roughly estimated at 1000 families. The tops of the hills commanding the town are defended by *sangars* (breastworks). In a cliff on the east side of the valley are a number of curious artificial caves, raised so far above the plain as to be inaccessible without a ladder or some aid to climbing. They are supposed to be ancient human dwellings, and were compared by one of the native *attachés* to some cave-dwellings near Jalalabad, known by the Pushtu name of *Samuch*.

From Kalah-i-nau to our camp at Au-shara was a distance of about nine miles. The road ran down a continuation of the Kalah-i-nau valley, and parallel to the stream that flows under the walls of the town. In fact we followed the windings of this stream for two marches, encamping on its banks both at Au-shara and Tur-i-Shaikh. As far as I could see, it is only from this the northern side that Kalah-i-nau could be attacked

with advantage. On every other side it is hemmed in by a broad belt of intricate undulations, amid which the various pathways converging on the town wind. The gradients are stiff, and the defiles many and narrow. A small determined force could hold them against superior numbers, and an enemy ignorant of the locality who sustained a defeat in such a country would be simply annihilated. From Au-shara we wended our way down a broadish valley, tenanted by Tokhis and Utaks, for 12 or 13 miles; then turned sharp across a high spur into a parallel valley, and marched five miles along it to Tur-i-Shaikh. I have already alluded to the sulphur-spring and domed reservoir there. The latter measured about 55 feet in diameter, 70 feet in height, and is built of kiln-dried bricks. On our march thence to Mangan we had several times to cross the stream, and the consequent delay to the baggage would have been very great had not Major Meiklejohn detached small fatigue-parties of his regiment with pickaxes, spades, and bill-hooks to construct a temporary bridge. Fortunately an abundance of tamarisk-wood was available on the banks of the stream itself, and so in less than half an hour two rough bridges of tamarisk-boughs strewn with earth and grass were put together, and the baggage-animals filed over gaily in a double line. At Khushk, I may mention, we again had to change a large portion of our transport. It is extraordinary how unpopular our transport service is with these people, notwithstanding the enormous hire they obtain. The Jamshidis and the Hazaras were, however, obliged to provide camels to replace those which we brought from Anardara and Sabzawar, some 450 in all. There is, however, one very good reason why the camel-owners here dislike being called on to fit us out with transport. They are not owners of baggage but of breeding camels. They own for the most part females, who are all, as we have found to our annoyance, far advanced in pregnancy at this season. Such camels are quite unfit for work, and many of them have dropped their young prematurely. A female camel that is once prematurely delivered is ever afterwards useless for breeding. All these things considered, it is not difficult to

understand why our service is unpopular with them. Every owner whose camels are now with us, is continually petitioning for his discharge. But they are all wanted for fetching supplies. Some 600 are already under orders to go off sharp and bring in wood, *bhoosa*, grain, and other articles of food-supply urgently needed. We are very hard up for wood. Writing six weeks ago I expressed my doubts of the truth of the report that the Murghab valley was woodless. It is, however, a fact. There is not a stick, or a bit of scrub even —nothing but long grass, in which the pheasants lie. The Tirband-i-Turkistan appears in the distance to be sparsely overgrown with trees.

Mangan is merely an open space among the hills whence a warm sulphur-spring issues. We drank its water *faute de mieux*. On a hill hard by are the indistinct traces of an old fort, as well as a *ziarat* and cemetery. It is evidently a great place for shepherds and their flocks. From Mangan to the banks of the Murghab we had a plain easy-going road to follow. Sardar Sher Ahmed Khan had been sent on the previous day to select and mark out the ford, a duty which he admirably carried out. The water was fully three feet deep, and though the channel was not 50 yards in breadth, the current was very rapid. Consequently several camels, carrying, as they did, across the stream a native follower or sepoy as well as a load, fell down, and only the praiseworthy exertions of the Jamshidi and Hazara sowars, who led and guided across the strings of camels, guarded the lower side of the ford, and rescued the immersed loads, prevented further accidents. The first camels began to cross about mid-day, and when the shades of night fell, a portion of the reserve baggage was still on the left bank. It crossed early the following morning, as soon as the genial rays of the sun had somewhat dissipated the chills of night. Early on the 13th, Captain Yate and Lieutenant Wright started for the General's camp near the fort, and by the time the main body arrived, our new camp was marked out and ready to be occupied. It is truly quite a model camp, the streets are so beautifully smooth and well kept, and the lines of tent-pegs are simply without a flaw.

Euclid himself could not have worked the whole thing out with greater mathematical precision. I cannot say that the combination of *kibitkas* and canvas is an improvement. I prefer pure canvas—if our earth-begrimed tents (I beg to except the noble mansions of Sir Peter Lumsden and all the senior officers of the Mission, which have, except at Kuhsan, been now pitched for the first time) merit the term "pure." Captain Cotton, 20th Panjab Infantry, has been appointed provost-marshal, and he has his work cut out for him. However, having conducted the Commission into its winter-quarters safe and sound, it is time to stop. Time enough before me to describe our life in winter-quarters, since we shall be here six weeks or even longer.

CHAPTER VII.

IN OUR WINTER-QUARTERS.

BALA MURGHAB, *26th Dec.*

IT is but too seldom that the Englishman's ideal Christmas is realised: the Christmas by the ruddy blazing home-fireside, among those that are nearest and dearest, unmarred by the suspicion of a sorrow or care, and unclouded by the shade of envy, hate, or distrust; the Christmas of pure glistening snow and dark transparent ice on a frosty but sunlit day, of beautiful holly with its cheery red berries and exquisite variegated leaves—the warm cosy breakfast-room, with its interchange of friendly presents and kindly greetings and wishes—the church and the old familiar pew with snug discreet crimson curtains, the ivy and holly girt pillars and arches, the altar ensconced in a framework of multicoloured texts embosomed in evergreens and everlastings (I pass over the pleasant hours of light toil and congenial labour, pervaded by such mild odour of flirtation as becomes the place and the people of whose handiwork these decorations are the fruit); and last not least, the Christmas dinner in a snug dining-room, well lit and with curtains drawn, and a big log-fire—the turkey, the sirloin, the mince-pies and the fiery plum-pudding, and a glass or two of good port "to keep a' down,"—and all this enjoyed with the appetite begotten of a good afternoon's skating or walking and a fine frosty air.

We too, on the Murghab, have, however, been trying to enjoy life and Christmas in our own way—individually and

collectively. With individual modes of enjoyment it is not my province to deal, but of the collective I may be allowed to say a word. This is the first time, I ween, that Christmas greetings have been interchanged and the health of our Queen and of absent friends has been drunk within sound of the rushing Murghab waters. Ivy and holly we had none, but thanks to the thoughtfulness of General Lumsden, we had juniper from the Tirband-i-Turkistan. Nor can a tent with a temporary fireplace that obstinately refuses to emit its smoke *viâ* the chimney, be held to be a satisfactory substitute for walls of brick and stone and a snug genial fireside. Divine service under the floral and artificial designs of a Jubbulpore single-poled tent, instead of the grand architecture, half veiled in a dress if not natural at least borrowed from Nature, of our old English churches, bereft of the grand, elevating, almost awe-inspiring tones of a fine organ, and the blended notes of a perfect choir singing through the aisles and re-echoing from the groined roof, performed not in the dim soft light shed from windows of old stained glass, but in a dull glare filtering through Indian *chics*—such a service is but a bare reality robbed of all its charms. Snow and ice we had none, though we had all looked forward to a very severe winter. Indeed we have every reason to thank the elements for their considerate treatment of us. The natives generally agree that this is so far an exceptionally mild winter. Although we have had from ten to fifteen degrees of frost at night, and some days have been cloudy, chilly, and lowering, hitherto no snow has fallen in the valleys, and rain only in slight showers. Indeed for the last week the days have been bright and sunny and the atmosphere clear, while at nights the stars have been seen twinkling with a vivacity characteristic of a frosty night in England. It would seem as if Nature had vowed that, whatever the general disadvantages of a Christmas spent in Badkis might be, the weather at least should not help to aggravate them. So the sun shone out right merrily on Christmas morn; and in the afternoon, in default of ice to skate or slide on, some of us went out shooting and brought in a miscellaneous bag of pheasant, duck, teal, snipe, quail, and an owl

for the advancement of natural history. And at dinner, if the turkey was conspicuous by its absence and the sir-loin was tough and tasteless, we had an excellent haunch of venison and pheasant galore for the trouble of shooting, and no expenses for preserving (a luxury not often obtainable at home); and as for the plum-pudding, which had come all the way from Teheran, and for size and quality equalled any I ever saw, it was quite irreproachable. Nor was the port wine (not, it is true, of the "old crusty," but of the "well-shaken-before-taken" type) wanting in which to drink to our Queen and our far-away friends, who, we doubt not, a few hours later, when our heads were reposing unconsciously on our pillows, returned us the compliment. And let me not forget to mention the delicious sugar-crusted cakes, compounded, baked, and turned out by the Commissariat, that department which from the day we first met together at Rindli up till now has been the "Whitely" of the Commission. And may it and its chief continue to be so to the end!

We could not but regret that our party on Christmas-day was not quite complete, as Captains Maitland and Gore and Lieutenant the Honourable M. G. Talbot were obliged by exigencies of duty to be absent. However, Christmas comes every year (more or less), whereas it is not ev that one can serve up to the world of strategy and neat little slice of the earth's face trimmed and dr neatly dished, with a long and learned report by wa Consequently they have kept their own little Chris where about Kalah-i-nau. Captain Griesbach re the 21st, and Captain Peacocke on the 23d. Of ings I will speak more in detail hereafter. dealt with the head-centre of the Commissio enough to follow up the radii. Our camp central position in that section of the Mu therefrom. The length of this section is and the width from three to four. Dow the Murghab, a rapid stream forty or fifty the fords not shallower than three feet, forming deep pools which one can well

haunt of that prey for which the angler yearns. As yet, strange to say, those among us who are keen votaries of the piscatorial art have not deemed it worth while to cast a fly or bait a hook, and yet it is said that the monsters of the Murghab are a foe not lightly to be tackled. Occasionally some Izaak Walton of the Afghan garrison in the fort may be seen intently watching a stick and line. Close to the right bank of this river is situated our camp. Follow this bank (it makes a wide bend to the east between the fort and our camp) for half a mile, and you will find yourself at what was once the main gate of the fort. But now both the gate and stout wall through which it was once the only legitimate means of ingress and egress, are fallen from their once high estate, and not Remus leapt more easily over the nascent walls of Rome than any enemy might skip over the effete outer defences of Bala Murghab. This outer wall and ditch formerly stretched right across the neck of the peninsula on which the town and citadel were, or rather are, situated. This peninsula is formed by a westward bend of the river, which with its precipitous banks protects the place to the south, west, and north. Only to the east were strong defensive works necessary. At the southern extremity of the eastern wall the river was once bridged. Of that bridge the traces are now but faint. The citadel has been entirely rebuilt within the last two years. It stands on a highish mound, whether natural or artificial, and its northern face, in which is the gate, rests on the river. Around it are scattered hovels of mud in which are quartered the garrison. This consists at present (most of the troops being at Panjdeh) of four guns of a battery and a portion of a Kabuli regiment of infantry. There is also accommodation for troops inside the citadel, where the Governor of Herat, Kazi Saad-ud-din, and General Ghaus-ud-din are, or recently were, residing. I doubt if the walls would long stand artillery-fire. The lie of the valley here is approximately from south-east to north-west. Some seven miles south-east of Bala Murghab Fort the river emerges from a narrow defile, ten or twelve miles in length, cutting the Tirband-i-Turkistan range; and some eight miles north-west of the same fort, the valley, bending westward, places

limit on the range of vision in that direction. This valley bounded on either side by high and steep undulating hills overed with grass. A month or six weeks later, it is said, these hills will be a lovely carpet of crocuses. The bulbs certainly abound, and already some of us, who have strong horticultural proclivities, have begun to plant them out in empty wine-cases, regardless of the probability that ere they can bud and bloom the Commission may have struck camp and be scattered along the frontier of the future. However, human nature—even with old maids and bachelors—has a craving for something to fondle and tend. Old maids have their cats; and old bachelors—well, they have their crocuses. The gently sloping ground between the hills and river on either side, varying from one and a half to two miles in breadth, is almost entirely under cultivation, past or present, and studded with villages of *kibitkas*. East of the river the settlements are mostly, if not entirely, those of the Firuzkuhis; while west of it are the Jamshidis, with a sprinkling of Hazaras.

There is little or nothing here to tempt us to leave camp-limits except for big or small game shooting. The party, consisting of General Lumsden, Major Holdich, Captains Durand, Yate, Borrow, and Heath, and Mr Merk, who went out on the 22d to shoot big game on the Tirband-i-Turkistan, returned on the 24th with twenty-four head of ibex and *uriyal*. To use the pithy and expressive words of a participator in the hunt, these animals were "running about like rabbits." The sportsmen were ranged along the top of a high cliff, up which the game was driven by a long line of beaters. The amusing part of the thing was that the beaters, who all had guns blazed away at the game to their hearts' content. How man head of game were killed in all it is impossible to say. Amon the twenty-four above mentioned were several fine hea some of which will go to enrich the treasures of natural histo The great place for pheasants is near Karawulkhana, so ten miles down the river. A very hot corner, however, discovered within five miles of camp, where, in additio pheasant, snipe, and a few geese, duck and teal, and eve odd quail, may be bagged. It is, however, pretty well p

out by this time. The same place is a favourite resort for pig, and in a few days we hope to make up a party and get a good run out of the bristly denizens of its reed-beds. Another game-bird occasionally seen about here is the *obara* or *telur* (a species of bustard). Among the rocky cliffs of the Tirband-i-Turkistan *chikore* simply swarm, but to shoot them is another thing. Riding here is no pleasure, the country is so cut up by ditches, canals, inundated patches, ploughed fields; and then there is nothing whatever to make riding attractive, no beauty of scenery, indeed nothing to see at all. A cluster of *kibitkas* once seen is seen for ever; the Jamshidi peasant is not the sort of fellow one cannot see too much of, and his wife and daughter have neither that beauty of feature and form, nor that coquettish elegance of attire, which finds favour in the eyes of the stronger sex. I have before remarked that the Turkoman and Chahar Aimak women are not veiled, although on the near approach of so strange a phenomenon as a Britisher they apparently deem it discreet and wise to half screen their loveliness behind a corner of their head-gear, in a manner suggestive of "hide and seek" or "peep-oh." Then there is not a tree or shrub anywhere, and the crops are still in embryo; so you will easily understand that we seek our amusements more in camp than out of it. It is only the officers of the Survey and Intelligence departments whom duty calls out of camp. The rest of us are detained in camp by duty, except our zealous and energetic provost-marshal, who hovers on the outskirts.

Now to see what sort of camp it is in which we can amuse ourselves. Let us take a bird's-eye view of it. You see the flag-staff and the British ensign in the centre, whence four roads radiate north, south, east, and west. The tents that line both sides of the road running north and south are those of the officers of the Commission. West of this road you see a mixture of tents and *kibitkas*, and rows of horses and ponies. Those are the cavalry lines, and on their left flank are our two lawn-tennis courts, not exactly as flat as a billiard-table. The road running east and west bisects the cavalry lines, and severs the infantry from the commissariat

nd hospitals; in short, the infantry occupy the north-east quarter, and the commissariat and hospitals the south-east. These are the general features. Do you see that big single-poled tent south-east of the flag-staff? That is the Commissioner's tent, and, as it should be, the biggest. In fact you may very well gauge the rank and importance of each of us by the size of our tents, except in one or two cases where a love of simplicity or a sense of snugness has outweighed the claims of pride and dignity. Next look at the big doubled-poled tent, linked to a single-poled; that is the mess—the former the dining, the latter the ante-room. We breakfast at 9, and dine at 6.30; and some fellows with enviable digestions lunch in between. Till very recently we had, to all intents and purposes, no English papers or periodicals. The fact is, they were sent *viâ* Bushire, Teheran, and Mashhad, and took three months in reaching us. It is only the last two mails that have brought us the English papers up to 17th and 22d November. In the meantime weeks and weeks of the products of the English daily, weekly, and monthly press are careering along the high-roads of Persia, and will reach us about the time we leave this and need waste-paper for packing. So they'll come in useful after all, if rather dear at the price. It is pleasant once more to look on the familiar covers of 'Blackwood' and the 'Nineteenth Century,' the 'Fortnightly' and the 'Contemporary.' You see we only patronise the higher flights of literary effort. None of your Society monthlies for those who are about to say unto Russia, "Thus far, and no farther," and who are to mark an era—an important era—in the history of the Central Asian question. Our mess-tables groan not beneath the weight of the scandal or gossip loving pages of 'Truth,' the 'World,' and 'Vanity Fair.' And as for our chairs, they would, I verily believe, collapse at the very sight of such rubbish. You never saw such chairs. I hear they are the outcome of jail-labour. Verily, if they are, the Government need have no fear that jail-industries will interfere with independent enterprise. No one would ever twice trouble the jail that made such chairs. One officer of

rather portly dimensions has brought to ruin no less than five of these delusive seats; and the writer, who may be classed as a middle-weight, has twice measured his length on the floor. These chairs have but one good feature—viz., that they are admirable promoters of merriment; they collapse so suddenly, and yet so harmlessly; they are the most perfect of practical jokers—they produce unfailing merriment, and inflict neither bodily nor mental hurt. We have one or two other jokers, equally incorrigible, in our mess; not practical, however, but verbal. In fact, so free at times is the flow of puns and jokes, that it has been often suggested that a collection of them should be made and styled the "A. B. C. book of jokes." However, the most prolific perpetrator of these *jeux d'esprit*—and marvellous indeed are some of them—declines firmly to assist in perpetuating them. See now how good cometh of evil. A treacherous chair and a terrible pun are distinctly evils, are they not? And yet supposing you are a bit down in your luck, and you are sitting silent over your repast with an expression that recalls to your neighbours that line of Horace—

"Post equitem sedet atra cura,"

suddenly—crash, and opposite you above the convivial board peers the visage, half vexed, half amused, of the latest victim of our jail-born-and-bred chairs, while peals of laughter from the *convivæ* shake the very tent-sides. Or suddenly A's or B's latest atrocity bursts on the astonished ears of the assembled audience, and elicits rounds of good-natured, if somewhat ironical, merriment and applause. And of course you join in and laugh too, and at the sound of a hearty guffaw away flies dull care to seek refuge on some other shoulders. So springeth good out of evil. And yet what sapient tongue is it that hath said, "Thou shalt not do evil that good may come thereof"? Fortunately, perhaps jail-birds and punsters think otherwise.

It is a pleasant life here, because it is a life of work—a life in which there is no occasion, as in cantonment at times, to

murmur, "How the deuce am I to get through this infernal long day?" We are not early birds. We have had enough of cockcrow-rising since 1st September. Few of us now hear *réveillé* played by the drums and *suronais* of the 20th Panjab Infantry. If one does happen to awake in time and hear the strange enlivening strains breaking in upon the darkness of night, one wonders at first, what is this? Can any frivolous native dare to so infringe the solemn dignity of this camp as to dance and make merry in the small hours of the morn? And then you remember what it is, and happy in the knowledge that you can sleep several hours more, you drink in the melodious sounds, and as the last note of the pipe and tap of the drum dies away, you sink once more into somnolent oblivion, until your servant enters to announce that "the hot water is ready, and the breakfast-bugle will sound very soon." During the day each individual is occupied with his own duties and diversions. But at dinner all meet; and after dinner there is whist and *écarté*, &c., for those who like games of combined skill and chance, and a wide field of current literature for those who, after a good square meal, prefer to stock their brains with extra knowledge rather than exercise the knowledge previously stocked.

CAMP BALA MURGHAB, 2d *January.*

We have passed through Christmas week, and there is no marked increase of the numbers on the sick-list: I mean, of course, among the British, or as I should rather say, with due regard to precision, the European members of the Commission. But even in using that term I fail to be sufficiently comprehensive, seeing that one of our number, who showed a very just appreciation for the traditional sirloin and plum-pudding, comes of oriental lineage. Indeed we are all a singularly, I might almost say a determinedly, healthy lot; and what is said of the officers is equally true of the men. When I look back on the Afghan campaign, and the almost appalling mortality that decimated some, especially British regiments, and then compare it with the almost unbreached vitality of this Commission, the natural sequence is to trace

the effect back to the cause. And what is the cause? It is not the climate nor the absence of toil and hardship; on the contrary, the thermometric and barometric variations were exceptional, and the strain—be it mental or physical—on the capacities of all, no light one. To attribute it to "luck," were to take refuge in a subterfuge worthy of oriental fatalism, but unworthy of the scientifically practical spirit of the age. Good health is an edifice erected by care on the foundations of a good constitution. Care is of two kinds, personal and professional. That the Commission as a body is blessed with a good constitution, might be safely premised from the searching medical inspection to which all were submitted before starting, and has now been proved by practical test. Let it be conceded as a point of little or no moment that, as stated some five or six months back by a critic in the public press (it seems not unreasonable to conclude that the critic in question is one of the fairer sex, for men, with all their faults, do not indulge in invidious comparisons of *male* personal appearance), "there is not a single fine specimen of the British race in the Commission." What is of infinitely higher importance—viz., that it is made of good grit—has been satisfactorily demonstrated. The critic, whoever it be, did not stop to consider that the Russian Commission is composed of men, not women. Had we been dealing with a nation of Amazons—for chaste and impervious to male blandishments as they were, yet a weak point was found in Penthesilea's armour—then it were indeed not unworthy of the diplomatic foresight of our late Viceroy and his Foreign Secretary to allow manly beauty to score heavily in the competition for appointments to the Afghan Boundary Commission. Seeing, however, that *men* were about to enter the lists against *men*, we think that stress was rightly laid on more solid qualities.

It is now time to say something of recent events. Captain Griesbach's little trip was productive of two results—a sketch of Herat, and a suspicion of coal. He crossed the Band-i-Bala from Khushk, and camped [illegible] three miles north of Herat. Arrived there, [illegible]

once under the surveillance of the Herat authorities, and his escort assumed the functions of a guard. He received a visit from the brother of General Feramurz Khan, but was not invited to return that visit in Herat. When he commenced preparations for taking a photo, his escort, or rather guard, walked off with the black cloth; nor was he permitted to mount to the top of one of the *minars* in the Musalla. He was allowed, however, to make a pencil-sketch of the north and east faces of the city from a point about 1¼ mile north-east of it. The Afghan officials, though obstructive, appear to have been polite enough. The people were everywhere civil and attentive, except at Kalah-i-nau. That the Nizam-ud-daulah was neglectful, there is no doubt; but that he was so, surprises me. My experience of him would have led me to augur the very reverse. After a stay of two days, Captain Griesbach returned by the Band-i-Zarmast to Kalah-i-nau, and thence to Bala Murghab. In the mountain-range north of Herat (Band-i-Baba and Zarmast) he found traces of the *talchirs* of India, the lowest of the Indian coal-measures, and which in Bengal and the Central Provinces always underlie the productive coal-beds (*gondwanas*). This discovery leads him to believe that coal-seams would probably be met with in the ranges east of the Band-i-Zarmast, and perhaps in the Davandar range.

Captain Peacocke's wanderings in Southern and Central Badkis have greatly increased our knowledge of that tract, and, combined with the operations of Major Holdich, Captains Gore and Maitland, Lieutenant Talbot, and Surveyor Imam Sharif, have furnished a fairly complete survey of and report on the roads, water, and supplies of the country bounded by the Hari Rud on the west and south, the road from Herat *viâ* Kalah-i-nau to Bala Murghab on the east, and on the north by a line drawn along the Murghab valley to its junction with the Khushk, then up the Khushk to Chaman-i-bed, and thence through Ak-rabat and Kungruali to the Hari Rud. I may mention here that it is not unlikely that Sir Peter Lumsden will follow this route to Pul-i-Khatun and Sarakhs.

About the 28th ultimo, Captains Maitland and Gore and

Lieutenant Talbot arrived. Having moved from Kuhsan *viâ* Kafir Kalah and Toman Aka, and thence through the Chashma-i-sabz Pass in Colonel Ridgeway's track to Khushk and Kalah-i-nau, they separated, Captain Maitland following in the steps of the surveyor, Imam Sharif, and the other two in those of Colonel Ridgeway's party. The results of the survey made are entirely satisfactory. On the 1st instant Captain Peacocke and Mr Merk started on a trip to Andkhui. On the 5th instant, weather permitting, a party consisting of Colonel Ridgeway, Majors Bax and Meiklejohn, Dr Owen, Captain Maitland, and myself, go to Panjdeh, returning about the 14th. Colonel Ridgeway and Captain Maitland are combining duty with pleasure—at least I trust so. Anyhow, I can answer for the duty. We ought to get good pheasant-shooting *en route*. A party of six of us went to Karawul-khana a week ago and bagged seventy-one pheasants, besides duck, snipe, teal, and quail.

Dr Owen will extend to the Saruks the boon of that medical skill and devotion to his profession which should have made his memory dear to many a human creature between the Helmund and the Murghab. The rest of us are going to see and to be seen, and to buy the fruits of Turkoman industry, quantities of which, however, in daily increasing proportions, are brought into camp here. The Turkomans almost invariably employ Jews for this purpose. And yet, curiously enough, the Turkomans, who trade on their own hook, are less amenable to a bargain and less willing to abate their original price than the Jew. I cannot say I am much taken with their jewellery (silver or silver-gilt inlaid with cornelian, a stone that here fetches a comparatively high price), but their carpet-work is very handsome and lasts for an indefinite time, the colours seeming to soften and lose none of their distinctness by age and wear and tear. Their *aghari*, a very expensive kind of fine cloth woven—the brown of the fine under-down on a two-year old camel, and the white of the finest sheep's-wool—is a product much in demand among the higher and wealthier classes. In reality there is *aghari* of all prices from Rs. 6 or 7 a yard down to as many annas. Its great fault is, that

to the European eye it does not look its value. Of their silver ornaments none are prettier than the little caps, overlaid with thin small plates of silver, and decorated often with little silver bells, &c., worn by the women. Some decent Turkoman horses have been bought here for sums very small in comparison with what is paid in India for Arabs, *walers*, or country-breds.

The officers of the Survey department are at present very busy connecting the various surveys taken, and working out their calculations. To-day the weather has taken a decided turn for the worse; the higher hills are covered with snow, and down here it rains and drizzles, and altogether looks very unpropitious either for our trip to Panjdeh or for future survey operations. As soon as it clears, one or two expeditions will have to be made to the top of the Tirband-i-Turkistan, and one or two to the nearer hills. Both the Survey and Intelligence want a man to go into the Firuzkuhi country; but no one is available, so short-handed are they. It is unfortunate that three officers of the Intelligence branch were not sent, as was, I believe, the desire of the Government of India. The officers of the Survey have long foreseen the difficulty they would experience in carrying out all the work expected of them. Even as it is, Captain Peacocke has for the last six weeks been combining the duties of an officer of the Survey and the Intelligence departments.

3d January.

It looks as if foul weather had set in in earnest. This morning a fall of snow succeeded to the heavy rain of the previous evening and night. Our *gymkhana* on the 1st instant was a complete success. Among the spectators, in addition to Sir Peter Lumsden, was Kazi Saad-ud-din, General Ghaus-ud-din, and their suites. We had offered prizes for a race open to all horses the property of Afghan subjects, be they Turkoman, Jamshidi, Hazara, Afghan, or of any other race. The first day not a single entry was made. But when they had seen our sports they were fired with a spirit of rivalry, and at an early hour yesterday morning a lot of them

were to be seen galloping over the course the steeds they proposed racing in the afternoon. Luckily for those steeds it soon began to rain, and all idea of a second day of the *gymkhana* was abandoned. On the first day, in addition to such laughter-moving events as the races for Persian and Indian mules (the Indian mule is much swifter though less of a weight-carrier than the Persian), *syces'* ponies, a camel-race and a *doolie*-race, we had a very good race (the A. B. C. Derby) for all horses, won by Captain Durand's Arab Merodach, ridden by Mr Drummond; The Chicken, a *waler* belonging to the same owner, ridden by Mr Rawlins, being a good second. Distance one mile. The half-mile flat race for ponies was won easily by Dr Owen's The Shovel, ridden by Mr Wright. The Badkis and Bala Murghab Chases for Galloways and ponies fell through owing to the subsequent bad weather. The tugs-of-war between Sikhs and Mohammedans of the 11th Bengal Lancers and the right and left wings of the 20th Native Infantry were hard-fought contests, that aroused great enthusiasm and excitement among partisans and spectators alike. Tent-pegging and lime-cutting, though interesting as feats of skill evincing good horsemanship and a true hand and eye, are less attractive to the general public. On the evening of New Year's Day, after dinner, by the kind permission of Major Meiklejohn, the Kattaks of his regiment performed several of their native dances for our amusement. They danced in a circle round a huge bonfire, sometimes with swords, sometimes without. Each dance began with a slow measure, which gradually quickened and quickened until it culminated in a movement to the tune of the drums and *suronais*, of such rapidity that the few who had strength to join in it at all very soon collapsed. The enthusiasm and endurance of the pipers and drummers was even more surprising than that of the dancers. Finally, two or three of the most expert handlers of the sword went through several exercises with it in time to the music. The sight of all this proved too much for a Ghilzai camel-driver, who, seizing a sword, joined in and certainly eclipsed the others. The performance

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with a mock Hindu Yogi dance performed by a Mohammedan of the 20th Native Infantry. If rather ghastly, it was also amusing, and a very good piece of acting.

Robberies are no uncommon occurrence in our camp—usually, however, of the nature of petty thefts; but last night one of our number was robbed of English gold and notes to the value of about £50. There is little doubt that the robbery could only have been effected by or with the connivance of one of the owner's servants, or some one familiar with his habits. I myself was so unfortunate as to be robbed at Kuhsan by a Hazara servant of money and other articles to the value of Rs. 600. I ascertained afterwards that the rascal had even at Quetta openly avowed that his only object in accompanying the Mission was to get his expenses paid to Mashhad-i-Mukaddas, and there ask forgiveness for all his sins at the shrine of Imam Reza. Evidently the burden of his sins did not weigh heavily on him, since he did not scruple to add to them a theft of Rs. 600. Indeed I do not feel sure that he did not regard such a deed as something in his favour, to be weighed in the balance against his more peculiarly Mohammedan sins. It is with reluctance that I would appear to accuse an Imam, far less the Prophet himself, of connivance at crime; but really, where the injured is a Kafir and the injurer a true believer—especially if he bestowed a portion of his ill-gotten gains in *khairat* and *zakat* (alms)—it is hard to say in what light the Leader of the Faithful might regard such an act. And supposing he did deem such a sin pardonable, would he not be acting up to the self-same spirit which animated the Catholics and Reformers of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries? What more noble aim for a true Catholic than to compass the death of a follower of Huss or Wicklif, a Lutheran or Calvinist, a Protestant or Huguenot? And did they, in their turn, ever spare the Catholic?

BALA MURGHAB, *9th January.*

Everywhere snow, as far as the eye can see. Not very far, it is true: 10 or 15 miles north to south, two or three only east and west. The most distant and most striking features

of the snowy landscape are the comparatively high (9000 to 10,000 feet above sea-level) peaks of the Tirband-i-Turkistan, against the snowy slopes of which stand out in dark relief a few scattered junipers with their sombre evergreen foliage. Looking from camp southward to the Darband or gorge which gives passage to the Murghab through the mountain-range above mentioned, the eye rests on one broad sheet of snow cast into folds and furrows by the undulations and inequalities of the mountainous surface on which it rests. This is the northern aspect. But ride out to the mouth of the Darband, turn round and look northward; the southerly slopes are brown and bereft of snow. Cold as it is (the thermometer registered zero last night, and stood at 8° at 10 A.M. this morning), the sun's rays have their power, and glad indeed are we all to catch a glimpse of the sun after its week's imprisonment amid clouds, rain, and snow, and to congratulate it on its restoration to its old established rights and privileges. Since the 1st instant, when it kindly beamed upon and encouraged our *gymkhana*, it has been unable to hold its own against the combined forces of the other meteorological powers. On that day too, with a genial, but I fear rather deceptive smile, it wished Mr Merk and Captain Peacocke God-speed on their journey to Andkhui and Khwaja Salih. Its intentions were doubtless of the best, but have proved quite unequal to conciliating and pacifying the notoriously acrid and uncertain temper of old Father Christmas. By the agency of some good fairy who sat on his knee and chucked him under the chin, stroked his snowy beard, and saw that the thorns of his holly wreath did not irritate his venerable brows, and of some benign genius who plied him steadily with beef, plum-pudding, and port wine, and amused him with snap-dragon and Christmas-boxes, Christmas week on the Murghab was peacefully tided over. But when the old gentleman woke on the morning of the 2d January with a faint suspicion of having lived, not wisely, but too well, for eight days, and with possibly just a touch of gout in one toe, then burst forth the vials of his pent-up wrath. "No more *gymkhana* meets for you, my fine fellow," said he to the

honorary secretary of the A. B. C. Gymkhana; "no more God-speeds and pleasant journeys for you, sirs," shouted he after the wayfarers. And at his bidding the clouds massed in martial array, and wind and rain, snow and sleet, mist and cold, donned their murky armour and bared their cruel cutting blades for action. Then the sun, thinking discretion the better part of valour, withdrew into his own shell, and left the denizens of Badkis to fight their own battles with the hostile elements as best they could.

However, to make a long story short, we have survived it, and, barring an abnormal increase of rheums and catarrhs, red-tipped noses and chilblains, are none the worse for it. True, we were fain to don our best armour, and quaint indeed was some of our war-paint. Wide would have opened the eyes of medieval chivalry could they have seen us: for visored helmets, Balaclava caps; for cuirasses, breast-plates, coats-of-mail, and thigh-pieces, voluminous silk embroidered *poshtins*, effectually shielding the wearer from neck to ankle from the onslaughts of cold (alas! not the Amir's "specially selected" *poshtins*—I begin to fear they are but a myth); and then the understandings—so varied were they in material, hue, size, fit, and shape, that I give up in despair any attempt to describe them. That they have their attractions is certain, be it from a picturesque or ridiculous point of view — so much so, indeed, that a proposal to have our "understandings" photoed was received with general applause. I shall hope to send you a copy of that photo, and then the public will be able to decide which of twenty-nine pairs of felt or fur boots best combines the attributes of warmth, beauty, and elegance, and can award the palm accordingly. Personally I am inclined to give the palm to the Russian boots, lined with I know not what, and bordered with some dark, soft, delicious fur, with which the Commissioner and those who accompanied him from England have come provided. At least when I contrast them with the slipshod fox-skin concerns soled with thick felt which protect my poor feet, I confess to a spasm of envy, especially when my friends compare me to a low-comedy brigand on a

fifth-rate provincial stage. Beauty, however, apart, life here now would be intolerable without them. One's own tent is all very well: some favoured mortals have been able to construct fireplaces and chimneys, and less favoured ones toast their toes over pans of charcoal. Alas for chilblains! But the mess-tent is like a damp cellar—it gives you the cold shivers to go into it. Where are those stoves of which I have heard talk? Why, even the earthen utensils filled with live charcoal, which we use in our own tents, would be better than nothing! Some fellows say they cannot stand sitting over charcoal, it gives them a headache. I am no lover of charcoal-fumes myself; but with the thermometer at zero, one will put up with a trifle to ensure warmth. The night before last the water froze in our glasses at dinner, and the ink in our inkstands and in our pens as we wrote after dinner. There was only one place of refuge, and that under the blankets; and yet even there some poor fellows said next morning they could not sleep for the cold. Be thankful for mercies great or small. I slept like a top.

The advent of this intense cold was most sudden. Up to the 6th it was raining in the valley, while snow fell on the higher elevations. At the same time it froze slightly every night. On the 6th and 7th snowballing was all the go. I shall not forget in a hurry the pelting I got from some twenty or thirty of the 20th Panjab Infantry, headed by that indefatigable old warrior, Subadar-Major Mowla Dad. Rawlins and I in a thoughtless moment challenged them, and a hot half-hour we had of it. I don't mind confessing now, that when Major Meiklejohn called "Hold! Enough!" I was pretty nearly reduced to crying *peccavi*. Indeed, had it not been for the timely assistance of our stalwart camel-contractor, Abdullah Khan, the same who lost four teeth in a scrimmage with the Afghan Commissioner's following at Khwaja Ali, we must have called *pax* sooner. On the 8th the cold commenced without the slightest warning. During the day the sun shone out pleasantly, but as the shades of night drew in the cold made itself felt. Even then—so blinded had we become to the possibility of cold by the previous mildness of the

weather—we required not only the evidence of our senses of touch and feeling, but the testimony of our eyes, in the form of a thermometer high at zero and water visibly freezing, to convince us that the rumoured cold of the Central Asian steppes was not a myth. This morning our first thought was of skating. We soon found a small partially flooded field; it was hard frozen, but the water had been too shallow to produce thick solid ice fit to bear. We at once let more water in, and to-morrow we hope—*i.e.*, those who have skates—to skate, and those who have no skates to slide. I hear wonderful stories of the marvellous skill of the Kabulis in sliding. No doubt some of the sowars of the 11th Bengal Lancers and the sepoys of the 20th Panjab Infantry will be able to teach us a thing or two. These men are now all snugly clad in coats and trousers of the warmest *barak*, provided by Government and made up at Herat. In fact, on the score of warm clothing, both the troops and followers of the Commission are admirably fitted out. The men of the 20th Panjab Infantry, too, now sport the sheepskin hat, the national head-dress of the Chahar Aimak and the Turkoman. It is a splendid head-cover, this sheepskin hat, in the cold weather, but intolerable, I should say, in a hot climate. It has, moreover, a decidedly martial air. To it, I believe, the favourable effect produced by the irregular cavalry of the Chahar Aimak, reviewed by Colonel Ridgeway near Ghorian, owed not a little. Not, be it understood, that I seek to detract from the personal qualities of these fine irregulars. Far from it. I both like them and think they are made of real good stuff. They are at present, I believe, favourably disposed to the British Government, and trustworthy partisans of Abdur Rahman Khan, the ally and *protégé* of that Government. It was mainly by their assistance that Sardar Abdul-Kudus took Herat some three years ago. It is just as well that Ayub Khan, by his assassination of Khan Aga, chief of the Jamshidis, should have alienated that tribe from himself. If Ayub Khan is to become a Russian tool—and it is more than probable that he will—enmity to him may nip in the bud any growth of

Russian proclivities among the Chahar Aimak, or at least among the Jamshidis.[1]

10th January.

Our skating schemes have not met with, or rather perhaps have met with, the success they merited. The water, after being allowed to run in all day, was shut off at nightfall. In the night all the water ran off mysteriously, so that the ice, although strong enough to bear one or two skaters, was, being unsupported by water beneath, quite unable to bear the weight of any number. Last night we had only 24° of frost, but it is cloudy to-day and freezing hard. Again we have flooded our skating-rink, and this time we intend to let a slight flow continue all night. May success attend our efforts!

I spent the sunshine hours of yesterday in riding out with a political officer to visit a Firuzkuhi chief, Mohammed Azam Khan, head of the Firuzkuhi settlers of the Bala Murghab district. It was very cold work riding; and when all was done, I came to the conclusion that I might just as well have stayed in camp. Our visit, I fear, put its recipient to sad inconvenience. He had, we found, but a very small house, occupied entirely by his wife or wives and family. Now it is well known that a Mohammedan is not in the habit of admitting strangers into the bosom of his family. Fortunately the native *attaché* with us had ridden ahead. The flabbergastered Khan in his dilemma first suggested entertaining us *sub Jove*, and as a happy afterthought recollected an empty stable. Happily it was clean. There rugs were spread and a welcome fire lit. Presently the Khan came forth (he had been titivating for ten minutes, and now appeared resplendent in the cast-off tunic of an infantry staff-sergeant, chevrons and all), and greeting us, ushered us into the stable. In course of conversation it transpired, what I had not before

[1] It seems now almost certain that on the withdrawal of the British Commission, the Chahar Aimak will ere long succumb to Russian influence. At any rate, it is contrary to reason to expect that they will in any way aid the Afghans in the defence of Herat. As early as May 1885, the Russians commenced intriguing with the Jamshidis through Ewaz Khan, a Saruk of Yulatan.

realised, that the political officer, myself, and the native *attaché* had come out in quest of *shikar*, and failing to find any, had sought solace in the pleasure of paying the Khan a visit. The Khan, of course, bowed his acknowledgments, and while inwardly cursing us for disturbing him from his domestic fireside, and obliging him to don his best toggery, expressed himself gratified by the attention. Insensibly the conversation wandered away from *shikar*, and I remarked that the political officer and the native *attaché* appeared to feel a most astounding interest in the Khan's tribe, relations, father, uncles, brothers, nephews—I might add his sisters and his cousins and his aunts, were it not that Mohammedan etiquette ignores the existence of female relatives. Curiously enough, the more personal the questions became, the more vague and general became the answers. Nothing more definite than the terms "great," "small," "very great," "very many," "very small," "very few," "God knows," &c., could be elicited. When our host thought fit to abandon generalities, he launched forth into exaggerations. For instance, when asked the strength of the Firuzkuhi tribe, he boldly hazarded "40,000 families." Now it is probable that the strength of this tribe does not exceed 10,000 families. The Khan, moreover, seemed by no means flattered by these tender inquiries after those nearest and dearest to him. Was it modesty or reticence that made him try to turn the conversation? By his side sat a sort of Fidus Achates, to whom he made a point of referring every second question at length. Fidus Achates, however, was even more stupid and worse informed than his master. Both were agreed on one point, that none but one of the greybeards (Rishsafidan) of the tribe could satisfactorily answer such strange and searching questions as his interlocutors put. Altogether the Khan seemed to score, for he said a great deal without imparting the least information of any value. In fact he beat the political officer on his own ground. I believe myself, and others say the same thing, that to obtain sound information recourse must be had to the humbler classes, who have neither wit nor object for lying. The peasant's knowledge is limited, but the little he knows he is more

likely to relate truthfully, than a personage of some rank who sees a snare in every question. The only chance of ascertaining approximate truth is to interrogate many, and to base the result on the preponderance of evidence and the general probabilities of the case. In fact, obtaining statistical information from the Biluch, the Afghan, or any other Oriental, is very much like taking an altitude by an aneroid. Both the results are so influenced by extraneous circumstances as to be but dubiously reliable.

Captain Peacocke on his way from Panjdeh here, was directed to prepare and submit plans for the temporary repairs of the Maruchak bridge. It was then discovered that no timber large enough for constructing bridges across the two broken arches could be obtained this side of Kadis, one of the head settlements of the Firuzkuhis, distant 50 or 60 miles south-east. It was accordingly determined to send Captain Yate up into the mountains beyond Kadis with a party to cut the firs or pines reputed to grow there. The juniper of the Tirband is too small. However, no sooner had this order been issued, than down came the snow; and now they say—*i.e.*, the Afghan Commissioner says—that not only are the passes blocked with snow, but that neither man nor beast could endure the severe cold of the altitude at which these firs or pines grow. Had this project been carried out, the logs were to have been either dragged to Maruchak by camels, or floated down the Murghab. Having procured the timber, Captain Yate was then to have gone to Maruchak and repaired the broken bridge in accordance with Captain Peacocke's plans. This bridge was intended for the passage of the General's party on its way to Sarakhs. The Murghab is liable to floods later on, after rain and snow, especially in the early spring. Had Captain Yate gone to Kadis, I should have accompanied him, as would also a native surveyor. It is to be regretted that we could not go, as the Firuzkuhi country has never been visited by a European, and both the Foreign Office and the Intelligence branch, as well as the Survey department, are desirous of obtaining some information about this tribe and their country.

Similarly, the Panjdeh party, consisting of Colonel Ridgeway, Majors Bax and Meiklejohn, Captain Maitland, Dr Owen, and myself (*i.e.*, before I elected to go to Kadis in preference), which should have started on the 5th instant, having been delayed a few days by the unpropitious state of the weather, will probably now not go at all. As far as buying carpets, jewellery, and other Turkoman products goes, we are all by this time pretty well fitted out with them. Every day a number of Turkomans enter camp with a carpet or several other articles for which the Briton is known to have a hankering, strapped on behind their saddles. This or that they sell, and off they go back to Panjdeh again. They travel light apparently, with nothing but the clothes they wear, a saddle and bridle, and a trifle of food for themselves and their horses. I was much edified the other day by the account given me by one of my syces of a Turkoman horse brought into camp for sale. After several laudatory comments on the height, shape, and action of the animal, he added—"and from the day of its birth it has been fed on nothing but *dumbas'* tails."[1] I believe that the Turkomans were in the habit of giving their horses *dumba* fat when in training for or on a raid. I have also heard that *kurút* (dried and condensed *mast*, a kind of sour curds much consumed by the people of Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia) is given by the Turkomans to their horses when they have extra hard work before them. Certain it is that *kurút* is almost if not the only thing that will render imperceptible the unpleasant taste of salt or brackish water. Stay! There is one other thing, and that is a great thirst.

It is a wonderfully neat camp, this of ours. Leaving out of the question the cavalry and infantry lines and the officers' quarters, which ought to be, if they are not (and I do not hesitate to say that they are), models of neatness and order, let us pass on to the transport lines and the commissariat "godown." Look at the mules arranged in lines of perfect regularity, a model in point of cleanliness to any private stable in camp. For each animal a mud feeding-trough has

[1] *Dumba*=fat-tailed sheep.

been constructed, and the pack-saddles and gear of each two or quartet of mules carefully wrapped up in a stout tarpaulin that defies rain and snow, stand each in front of the string to which they belong. Then cross the road and look at the commissariat stores piled on platforms surrounded by a ditch, and covered with tarpaulins. Rain and snow will affect them little. Round the platforms are arranged in symmetrical rows the tents and *kibitkas* of the warrant officers, sergeants, *babus*, artisans, and coolies, the whole being girt with a wall and ditch. By the by, our long-expected caravans from Mashhad have arrived. Khan Baba Khan, one of the native *attachés*, was sent there from Kuhsan on the 24th November last. Apparently he finds life in Mashhad-i-Mukaddas—the scene of martyrdom and burial-place of Imam Reza, the provincial capital of North-Eastern Persia, and an important social and commercial centre—more seductive than the rigid routine of camp-life. On the 8th some 200 mules arrived, and yesterday about 100 camels. Tea, potatoes, charcoal, and warm clothing are the principal contents. Of the two last, if we are to have more than 32° of frost, we, or rather our followers, cannot have too much. As for the potatoes, long deprivation of that luxury has made us all Irishmen on that point; and as for those who are genuine natives of the Emerald Isle, not the name of shamrock or poteen could sound sweeter in their ears than does now the word "pratie." I hear also a rumour current that the first consignment of the *poshtins* prepared at Kabul, and sent by the Amir as a gift to the Commission, has arrived. Anyhow, I see the guards of the 20th Panjab Infantry attired in *poshtins*, the softness of the skin of which, and the silkiness and length of the hair, attest to their excellent quality.

Passing from the commissariat, we enter the precincts of the hospitals, civil and military. Nothing could be snugger than the *kibitkas* of the sick. It is easy to regulate the temperature in them. I have, indeed, heard one or two officers domiciled in these nomad dwellings complain of leakage from the roof. Such is not, however, the case with the hospital *kibitkas*, whose *numdahs* are too solid and car[illegible] arra[illegible]

to admit a drop of water. But what are those two *kibitkas* over there, isolated and surrounded by a four-feet wall? They constitute the "female ward" of the Bala Murghab civil hospital. The civil surgeon tells me he has a great number of female patients, and very grateful they seem to be for his attention to them. I have not, however, yet heard that he has found any occupants for the "female ward." Supposing the lady herself to be willing, her relatives would demur. It will take time to initiate, habituate, and reconcile the trammelled mind of the Turkoman and Chahar Aimak to such an unwonted display of confidence in their womankind, and to accord to them such an unheard-of degree of freedom. The idea of one of their ladies leaving the family circle and going to live under the tutelage and care of the *hakim sahib!* —a great and wise physician no doubt, a very magician for skill, but young, too young, and too good-looking. Moreover, what would they do without the women of their households? It is the women who do all the drudgery—who make bread, and carry wood and water, who spin and weave, and, with the aid of their big ferocious sheep-dogs, protect the village while the men are ploughing, sowing, and tending their herds. In the first ten days of January, Dr Owen has had about 500 patients, mostly outdoor, but a good many of the men have remained as indoor patients. The British Commissioner has, I hear, wired to London for a supply of a newly discovered anæsthetic called "cocaine." This drug being rubbed or painted over any part produces insensibility to pain without any of the unpleasant after-effects of other anæsthetics or soporifics. With such an instrument at his command, the fame of our *hakim sahib* will assuredly be without rival in the Orient.

There seems to be little or no difference in the habits and manner of living of the Turkomans and the Chahar Aimak. Their houses are the same, and their style of dress identical. We have already seen something of the Jamshidis and Hazaras when we passed through Khushk and Kalah-i-nau. Moreover, not a few travellers have already visited and written of them. With regard however, to the death of Khan Aga, the late chief of the former, there seems to be several reports current.

I have, for instance, heard it stated that he, in conjunction with other chiefs of the Herat province, some of Afghan and others of Persian race, conspired to overthrow Ayub Khan. The latter at the head of his own troops met the conspirators near Ghorian, close to the ground on which the Afghan escort was reviewed by Colonel Ridgeway, and defeating them, took Khan Aga prisoner, and subsequently put him to death at Herat. The true story of his murder, however, would appear to be this: In 1880, Khan Aga was at Kabul, and accompanied General Roberts on his march to Kandahar in August of that year. Ayub Khan, defeated by Roberts, fled to Herat. Khan Aga repaired to his own tribe (Jamshidi), and then commenced intriguing against Ayub Khan among the other tribes of the Chahar Aimak. While thus occupied, he was seized by Faiz Mohammed Khan and Mohammed Sadik Khan, chiefs of the Tulak and Tagao Ishlan sections of the Taimani tribe, taken to Herat, and handed over to Ayub Khan, by whose order he was put to death.

Of the Taimanis less is known than of the other three tribes of the Chahar Aimak. They are settled at and around the head-waters of the Farah Rud, and their boundaries may be roughly laid down as,—on the north, the Hari Rud; on the east, the Hazarajat and Zamindawar; on the south and west, the road from Girishk through Farah to Herat. According to such information as could be gathered, the country of the Taimanis is inhabited by about 10,000 families of Taimanis, and 4000 to 5000 families of Tajiks and Mughals. The names of the ruling chiefs and the estimated numbers of their adherents are as follows: (1.) Sardar Ambiya Khan, chief of the Ghorat, about 8000 families, of whom nearly half are Tajiks and Mughals. (2.) Aga Rahmdal, chief of Shahrak, about 2000 families of Taimanis. (3.) Sultan Mohammed Khan, chief of the districts of Farsi and Chadrud, about 2000 Taimani families. (4.) Faiz Mohammed Khan, chief of Tulak, about 1500 Taimani families. (5.) Mohammed Sadik Khan, chief of Tagao Ishlan, about 1000 families (Taimanis). It is estimated that the Taimani chiefs could, if they combined their forces, put about 10,000 horsemen in the field. In esti-

mating the fighting power of all these tribes, it is customary to reckon only the horsemen, inasmuch as they alone are available for service out of their own country. No doubt every able-bodied man would aid in defence of his own village; and if ever the British Government were to desire to drill and discipline levies from the Aimak tribes, they would probably find them excellent material. The Firuzkuhis have the reputation of being the bravest of the Aimaks. By the word Aimak is held to be expressed semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural tribes, generally of Persian origin, and speaking Persian, and of the Sunni faith. The term Aimak is never applied to Turkomans, though I have heard it applied to nomad Afghans. And yet it by no means necessarily implies nomad, though commonly applied to nomads. Neither the Chahar Aimak of the Herat province (Jamshidis, Hazaras, Firuzkuhis, and Taimanis), nor the Taimuris of Khaf in Persia, are nomads, though they change their dwelling-place from time to time. Although the bitterest enmity and continual feuds exist between the several Aimak tribes and sections, there is a certain brotherhood binding them together against their common foes, the Afghan and the Turkoman.

But to return to the Taimanis. Their country is a *mélange* of arid mountain, barren steppe, and here and there green cultivated valleys and patches of soil. Water is fairly abundant. The valleys are narrow, and consequently not very productive. The climate is in some parts sultry in summer and mild in winter, and in others cool in summer and bitterly cold in winter. In many parts of the country ruins of stone and brick buildings, traces of an earlier and higher civilisation, are to be seen. Considering, however, that the dynasty of Ghor, which succeeded the Ghaznavide dynasty as conquerors of India, emanated from these parts, that is not surprising.

The Firuzkuhi territory is bounded on the north by the Tirband-i-Turkistan, on the east by the Hazarajat, on the south by the Hari Rud and Safid Kuh, and on the west by the Hazaras of Kalah-i-nau. This tribe is divided into three principal sections under three different chiefs, and occupies

three separate districts. One faction, numbering some 2500 families, under Sayad Mohammed Khan, is settled at and near Khwaja Chisht on the Hari Rud. The second, under Bahram Khan, estimated at 1500 to 2000 families, occupies the western districts, Kadis, Bala Murghab, &c. The third, under Fathullah Beg (an Achakzai by descent, whose abilities have raised him to his present influential position), comprises those Firuzkuhis who dwell in the eastern part of the Firuzkuhi territory, about Tagao-i-kucha and Chahar-tak, and in the *tagaos*, or valleys, on the right bank of the Murghab between Kara Jangal and the Darra-i-Sarwan. Fathullah Beg is now at Kabul. Some say the Amir has conferred on him the title of Nizam-ud-daulah. Anyhow he appears to be in favour in high quarters now, as he was also with Ayub Khan in 1880-81. His son, Niyaz Khan, officiates as chief of the eastern Firuzkuhis in his absence. Two hundred and fifty families[1] have lately, by the Amir's order, moved from Tagao-i-kucha to Gulran, 20 miles north of the Band-i-chashma-i-sabz, by which we crossed the Paropamisus on our march from Kuhsan to Khushk. Gulran is reported to be a most fertile spot, with abundance of good water and excellent soil. It is also a central and important point, in that there converge almost all the roads of Badkis, whether from the north, south, east, or west. It is a place possibly with a future. The Firuzkuhis take their name from a mountain named Firuzkuh, north-east of Teheran near Damavand, whence they were removed, it is said by Taimur Lang, to their present abodes, towards the close of the fourteenth century. They claim to be Kurds and descendants of Zuhak. Nadir took them back to Firuzkuh; but on his death they returned in increased numbers to the country they now occupy. They are now estimated at over 10,000 families, and they can put 3000 horsemen in the field.

In addition to the three main divisions which I have specified above, there are said to be Firuzkuhis settled in Maimena, and at Bandar, 50 miles south of Maimena, and some also

[1] When the Commission was encamped at Gulran in March 1885, nothing was to be seen or heard of these 250 families.

away at Balkh with Sardar Mohammed Isa Khan. The followers of Fathullah Beg are generally known as the Zai-hakim; but this is really only the name of one of the largest of the many sections of the Firuzkuhis. A similar remark applies to the name Zai-murad given to Bahram Khan's adherents. At Chahar-tak, on the Murghab, some 80 miles east of Bala Murghab, 500 or 600 families of Tajiks are settled, and are adherents of Fathullah Beg; while in Darra-i-Bam are settled many Ghilzai nomads (Musazais), who acknowledge the rule of Bahram Khan. During the last ten or twelve years, if not more, Fathullah Beg and Bahram Khan have been at enmity; and the latter, from his position on the Hazara border, has found it politic to be on friendly terms with the Hazaras. Consequently, in the not unfrequent frays between the Hazaras and Firuzkuhis, Bahram Khan has sided with the former. Nevertheless, Fathullah Beg has generally managed to hold his own. There is another small faction of some 250 families who follow the fortunes of one Mirza Mahmud, whose brother Fathullah Beg killed a good many years ago. The latter endeavoured to wipe out the blood-feud by giving Mirza Mahmud his daughter in marriage. Even this, however, has failed to entirely obliterate the memory of the original crime; and of late Mirza Mahmud, instead of assisting Fathullah Beg, has adopted a neutral attitude. Some four to five years ago Fathullah Beg and Bahram Khan, backed by the Hazaras, were on the point of commencing hostilities. Ayub Khan, who was then just about to start on the expedition which resulted in the miserable disaster of Maiwand and the siege of Kandahar, felt that it was unadvisable to leave the tribes in his rear in a state of active warfare. He accordingly sent Yalantush Khan, the present chief of the Jamshidis (Ayub had not yet alienated the Jamshidis by the murder of Khan Aga), to Moghur to mediate between the two tribes, and so succeeded in averting an open outbreak between them. The primary cause of enmity between Bahram Khan and Fathullah is said to have been the reciprocal abduction of each other's wives. It is to be hoped that in the interest of morality these two ladies have

obtained a formal divorce from their first husbands. It is to be feared, however, that this mutual exchange did not please all parties. It cannot have been a fair exchange. One or the other got the best of the bargain, depend upon it. For they have ever since been at enmity, and on several occasions this passive enmity has broken out into active warfare. Now, had these two modern Helens been equally lovely and attractive, it is not improbable that these two followers in the steps of Paris would either have agreed that "exchange is no robbery" or have settled the feud by changing back again. No: my imagination pictures one of these ladies as fair to see and in the heyday of youth and beauty; and the other in the autumn, perhaps in the winter, of life. Think of the inconsolable grief of the husband bereaved of his beauteous bride, and saddled with an old harridan; and conceive the fiendish joy of the other, unburdened of wrinkled old age and the proud captor of his foe's favourite wife! What a theme for a dramatic poem! Will no one arise and write a Firuzkuhiad?

Some fifteen miles from camp is a spot called the Darband-i-kilrikhta. Here the spurs, on both sides steep and rocky, run down to the edge of the Murghab. The ruins of a solid stone wall carried on either side along these spurs and into the river, may still be seen. It may have been built as a defence against Turkomans. But legend says that the lovely daughter of the chief of some neighbouring tribe promised her hand in marriage to that one of her wooers who could dam the Murghab. One of them, Mohammad Hanifa, more determined or more madly in love than the rest, essayed and succeeded. The fickle fair one, incited by an aversion for matrimony, not usual with beautiful women, having fulfilled her promise so far as to go through with the marriage ceremony, straightway sought the shelter, not of her husband's, but her father's house. The unfortunate husband in despair drowned his sorrows—not in drink—but in the waters of the Murghab.

The possession of the Bala Murghab valley seems within the last thirty or forty years never to have rested long with the same tribe. In turn the Hazaras, Jamshidis, and

Firuzkuhis have all occupied it. It seems surprising t
locality so exposed to the raids of the Saruk Turko
should have been so keenly contested. Its soil, howeve
wonderfully productive. Now all three tribes have se
ments at Bala Murghab, and the Jamshidis march with t
old foes the Saruks near Karawulkhana, whose settleme
extend thence to Yulatan and Kalah Wali, and in small nu
bers up the Khushk valley, and for pastoral purposes ov
Badkis. They number some 7000 families (exclusive
about 4000 under Russian rule at Yulatan), and are thu
subdivided:—

Tribes.	Sections.	Sub-sections.
1. Sukhti,	Erdan,	2
	Chamcheh,	2
	Dadeh Quli,	7
2. Harzegi,	6,	—
3. Khorasanli,	7,	—
4. Bairaj,	6,	—
5. Aleshah,	6,	—

The Saruks, as a body, owe allegiance to no one man; each tribe, however, and each section or subsection, acknowledges the leadership of some member of the tribe, section, or subsection, whether his influence be due to hereditary claim or personal influence acquired by ability and bravery. They also recognise the influence of certain religious leaders known by the title of Ishan and Khalifa. The following are some of the most influential of their tribal, sectional, and religious chiefs: Khalifa Rahman Verdi, Taj Nazar Ishan, Kazi Aman Galdi, Ak Mohammed Khan, Mohammed Usman Khan Mimbashi, Soi Khan, Karaja Khan.

In time of any great emergency, such as a war, in which the whole of the Saruks are involved, the supreme power is by universal or general consent vested in one or more persons whose reputation for military skill, valour, and sagacity stands highest. The above named are among the number of those who on the 9th instant arrived here from Panjdeh and elsewhere, and paid their respects to the British Commissioner. There were about 120 in all. Opportunity was taken of this

visit to present each of them with some small token of the value which the British Government placed on their goodwill and friendliness. There is every reason to believe that, at present at least, the Saruks are favourably disposed to the British Government. Of their aversion to Russian rule there is no doubt: the fact that, when the Tekkes submitted to Russia, the Saruks promptly sent deputies to Herat to tender their allegiance to the Amir, is sufficient proof of that. I doubt not that they viewed such a course as merely the choice of two evils. Still, as they naturally chose what was in their eyes the least of the two, it is not difficult to surmise in what light they regarded the greater one.

19th January.

Life here is getting a little monotonous. We are tired of rain, snow, fog, frost, chills, and sitting still. We actually begin to miss the early rising and the marching, the toil and turmoil, bustle and worry. We wanted an excitement. We have just had one. A tiger, a real—no, not a live, a dead tiger! The news of its advent spread like wildfire, and in a few minutes loafers of all sorts—including, I must needs confess, many of my compatriots—had collected round the door of the Commissioner's tent to see the Central Asian tiger. Wonderful, what a lot of idlers there are in camp! Signs of the times!—quite time that we were off from here. It is lovely weather, a bright clear sun and a genial southerly breeze. Why stay here? *Khuda jane!*—which meaneth, God knows! Some say the Cabinets in London and St Petersburg cannot agree about the zone within which the boundary is to be fixed, and that the Russian Government is not disposed to be accommodating anent the question of withdrawal of their outposts from that zone. Other spreaders of rumour say that General Zelenoy is still at Tiflis—maybe sleighing, tobogganing, and otherwise disporting himself as Russians are wont to do in winter,—anything but thinking of boundary settlements; and that M. Lessar is at St Petersburg delivering lectures. What on? I should not wonder if he is taking as his text M. Vambéry's essays on the A. B. C. in the 'National Review,' which, it cannot be denied, are

text-books for beginners in the subject—and verily, only ginners would accept them as gospel. But about that tig or rather tigress: it was measured and found to be 8 fe 3 inches from the nose to the tip of the tail—not a bad si for a female; but the tail was an uncommonly long on Other measurements find the length from tip of nose to roo of tail to be 4 feet 9 inches, and of the tail 36 inches. Height at shoulders, 44 inches. These long tails are, I am told, characteristic of the hill-tigers. Well, one can get tired even of looking at the first Murghab tiger; and finally, Dr Aitchison carried it off, and his myrmidons will preserve it. But whether its stuffed effigy will in years to come keep watch and ward in General Lumsden's hall, or whether it will be posted in a museum to enlighten the British public, I cannot say; probably the latter. There is little doubt that Dr Aitchison will take or send back from Northern Afghanistan a valuable collection of birds and some beasts. There are lots of guns in camp, and lots of men who lose no opportunity of contributing to the advancement of the science of natural history. So the collection waxes apace—so much so, indeed, that it is now a matter of doubt what birds are wanted and what not. I think a daily bulletin of "Wanted the under-mentioned specimens, &c., &c.," posted in the ante-room, might simplify matters —unless, indeed, our learned naturalist persisted in using jaw-breaking Latin terms: is there anything more jaw-breaking than medical and scientific Latin? What a jargon it sounds beside the writings of the Julian and Augustan ages! I am surprised to find that no one in camp has a copy of the second volume of Sir Frederick Goldsmid's 'Eastern Persia,' containing Mr Blandford's report on the birds and beasts, and I hink plants, of the country traversed by the Seistan and Perso-eluch Boundary Commissions. If there is a copy in camp, is not where one would most naturally expect to find it. It is said that both Colonel Stewart and Mr Herbert are their way to join the Commission. But no one seems to w whether they will come here or await General Lums-s arrival at Sarakhs. However, no one seems to know hing. Both individuals and Governments often deem it

advisable to veil their actions in mystery; but in this case it is inaction that is mystified. If Russia is temporising, would it not be as well to employ our leisure moments in visiting the Perso-Afghan frontier? The boundary between Persia on one side, and Beluchistan and Afghanistan on the other, from the Persian Gulf a little west of Gwadur northward to the Bandan range, was surveyed and more or less definitely fixed in 1871-72; but thence northward to Sarakhs, what is the boundary? From Bandan to Kafir Kalah the boundary is problematical, being formed by an uninhabited desert called in its southern part the Dasht-i-Naumid. The Hari Rud is usually accepted as the boundary between Persia and Afghanistan from Sarakhs to Kafir Kalah. But there are indications that this is not the case.[1] However, those who take an interest in this question may form a very fair idea of how the land lies from Marvin's 'Merv' and Vambéry's recent article on the Afghan Boundary Commission in the 'National Review.' Any Russian pretensions in this direction have as little, if not less, foundation than their claims on Panjdeh and Badkis. The voluntary submission of the Saruks of Panjdeh to the Amir; the occupation of Ak-tapa, Maruchak, and Bala Murghab by Afghan garrisons; the colonisation of the Murghab valley by Hazaras, Jamshidis, and Firuzkuhis—that of the Khushk by the Saruks, and of Gulran by a strong section of the Firuzkuhis,—are indications unfavourable to Russian ambitions. I see a rumour in the papers that the Russian Government have thought fit to represent to the British Cabinet that the presence of our large escort is producing a disturbing effect among the Turkomans and Uzbeks under their rule. This is really an extraordinary farce. And what does Russia suppose is the influence on Turkomans and Uzbeks under Afghan rule of the presence of a garrison of 600 men at Sarakhs, of out-

[1] In 1884 and 1885 a Russo-Persian Boundary Commission was employed in demarcating the northern frontier of Persia from the Caspian at Hasan Kuli Bay to Sarakhs. When travelling in Khorasan in July 1885, I was given to understand that the demarcation was almost completed. But lately a letter in one of the leading Russian journals stated that the frontier between Ashkabad and Sarakhs was still undefined. It is exactly in that quarter that Russia is interested in keeping the question open.

posts at Yulatan and Pul-i-Khatun, and spies in disguise over the place? However, it would appear that these effo of the Russians, both open and underhand, have failed to pr duce among the Saruks and Chahar Aimak even a tithe of th uneasiness that the silent presence of a small British escor produces at Merv, and perhaps, too, beyond Merv. It i evident that the former at first by no means clearly understood the peaceful character of this Commission, and it is probable that they still entertain the idea that, sooner or later, there will be an appeal to arms. Such being their belief, the attitude of these tribes towards the British Commission is decidedly satisfactory. They have virtually received and welcomed British troops as their allies and friends. What more do we want?

Life for the past week has been uneventful. Nothing on hand by way of amusement but the occasional pursuit of the rapidly thinning pheasants and the wary duck. The pheasants here are seemingly of an amphibious species. They live amidst water—deep water—and roost on reeds or tufts of grass. There is not a tree anywhere for them to roost on. Moreover, they can swim. A cock-pheasant, shot by one of General Lumsden's party at Maruchak, fell into the middle of the Murghab (which is 40 to 50 yards broad, deep, and swift), swam to the far side, got out, and running up the bank, disappeared. I saw a hen do precisely the same thing. It swam with considerable strength (although it had at least a broken wing, if no severer injury), and on reaching the bank, ran up it into the jungle without showing the slightest sign of fatigue.

To-morrow three or four of us are off for a three days' trip o a spot 16 miles down the river, where, it is said, the ery best pheasant-shooting between here and Panjdeh is be got. It is near there that the tigress was shot. No ch luck, I fear, as our coming across another. And even if did, our rifles might not be handy; and then we might under the painful necessity of giving it a wide berth— other words, of beating a judicious, and, let it be hoped, terly retreat, the pace to be regulated by circumstances

over which we would of course have no control. Besides *shikar*, we have still one other but rather one-sided (the fun is all with the seller) diversion—namely, being fleeced by the Turkoman and his middlemen. Carpets both from Merv and Panjdeh, jewellery, and indifferent horses and ponies, have just about had their day. But the Turkoman is like Mr Bolt in 'Put Yourself in his Place'—viz., "bad to beat." One never knows when he has shot his last *bolt*. One of them turned up the other day with an enormous donkey. Never did I see a bigger—and such ears! 2 feet 3½ inches from tip to tip; I measured them. The fellow positively asked Rs. 80 for this donkey—and charged extra for the ears! It would not improbably have won the donkey-race in our *gymkhana;* but Rs. 80 is a long price for a quadruped, when the added money is *nil* and there are no lotteries. If this fine weather continues, our second *gymkhana* day will come off after all. The other day we had a camel sham-fight. I say sham-fight, because their mouths were securely tied up. I think it is well they were tied up; for they showed a most determined intention to spoil each other's beauty and prospects for life.

There is not a sign of any crops springing up yet in this valley. The snow, however, which as it lies and melts seems to act like a hothouse to the vegetation below it, has brought out hundreds of yellow crocuses. These rain-lands only produce one crop every year. Much of their fertility, it would seem, is caused by the snow, which, unlike rain which falls and flows away, lies and melts slowly, at once fertilising the soil and turning it with its warm covering into a veritable hotbed. This being so, why do not the cultivators here plant their seed in the early winter, so that it may spring up after the snowfall? Possibly they fear that a casual spell of very sharp frost, such as we had ten days ago, might ruin the whole crop. We have, I hear, had a threatening of mange among our horses. This, however, is not to be attributed to the quality of the food given to them, but to the fact that the barley and *bhoosa* which they consume has been brought into camp by mangy camels. Lots

of the camels are, or were, mangy. Close on 300 of these have now been turned off, having been replaced by sound camels that have just arrived from Mashhad. It was hoped that camels would be obtained here for a less rate than Rs. 35 a-month; but it would seem that the native *attaché* deputed to Mashhad has either found the market very high, or has not exercised on behalf of Government that astuteness which most Orientals display in striking a bargain.

31st January.

The last few days rumours of a move have been vaguely floating about camp. But yesterday, when the transport officer sent round a circular memo, calling for indents for carriages required in view of a possible move, the *on dits,* which before had been of a flimsy, airy texture, began to assume a tangible shape. The general consensus of public opinion in camp fixes as the probable date of this momentous event the 8th or 10th proximo, and our destination as the banks of the Hari Rud, to reach which we shall march straight across Badkis by the route explored by Captain Peacocke in December. Marching from here to Maruchak, we cross the river there (the once projected bridge is no longer necessary, as we shall cross the river before the melting of the mountain snows swells it to flood-level: if a good ford can be found near Karawulkhana half the Mission will cross there: Captain Yate starts to-morrow to examine and report on all the fords between here and Maruchak), and following the left bank of the Murghab to the neighbourhood of Band-i-Nadiri, thence turn westward into the Khushk valley. I see that the latest maps show the road from Bala Murghab to Panjdeh as following the left bank of the river all the way. Now it is true that formerly this road did exist; but of late, some few miles below Bala Murghab, the action of the river has washed away the soil up to the very foot of the steep hills bounding the valley on the west. There is, I hear, a track, steep and difficult, crossing the hills at the point where this breach in the level road exists. But such a track is not suited to the passage of the Commission with its train of 1200 camels. Following the

Khushk valley southward to Chaman-i-bed, we then turn westward, or rather south-westward, to Gulran (three marches). It will be time enough for us to move forward thence to Sarakhs when it is known that the Russian Commission is there and prepared to set to work. All our heavy camp-equipage will, it is said, be sent to Herat, until our summer-quarters are fixed upon. It is to be hoped we do not summer in the neighbourhood. The heat ought to be excessive. We march from here as light as possible. A caravan leaves here in a few days, by which all superfluous baggage and stores will be sent back to India. It will take us ten days to march from here to Gulran. As only one day's supplies will be laid in probably at each stage, it is to be hoped that no heavy fall of rain or snow, or excessive cold, will hamper our movements. The supplies for our march as far as the Hari Rud will be laid out by the Afghan authorities from Khushk, Herat, and probably in part from Ghorian and Kuhsan, from which latter place Gulran is only distant two longish marches—viz., Kuhsan to Chashma-i-sabz, 25 miles, and thence over the Au-safid Pass to Gulran, 22 miles. Gulran is an important central point in Badkis, on which most of the roads in that district converge. Captain Peacocke found Saruk nomads with large flocks settled there.

This march across Badkis lays at rest the question whether or not that tract in its present state could be crossed by a considerable force hampered with a long transport-train. It is known that the roads are passable for all arms, and that water, though often more brackish than sweet, is procurable from wells and springs. In olden times there was a good caravan-route from Pul-i-Khatun and Nauruzabad through Kungruali and Gulran to the Hari Rud valley near Ghorian. In fact the whole of Badkis is seamed with practicable tracks, except that part lying between Ak-rabat and Gumbazli, about 50 miles west of Panjdeh. When Alikhanoff last November came down on Panjdeh, he probably crossed from Sarakhs to Yulatan, and then came up the Murghab. There seems little doubt that but for the prompt action of the Afghan authorities Panjdeh or Ak-tapa would

now be, as Pul-i-Khatun is, the site of a Russian outpost. It is indeed said that when the British Commissioner reached Mashhad at the end of October last, a report was there current of a projected Russian visit to Panjdeh. It is perhaps due to this accidental information that Colonel Alikhanoff, when he was so polite as to call on the Afghan general at Panjdeh, had the good fortune to find him at home, and to meet with a warm though not a cordial reception. At present, of course, supplies are procurable nowhere in Badkis; consequently a force crossing it must either have supplies laid out beforehand for it, or carry them with it.

As far as the road is concerned, this route is preferable to that which was followed by General Lumsden on his march from Sarakhs to Kuhsan. Such obstacles as the Paskumnur and Stoi Passes are avoided. The fact is, that to march a considerable body of cavalry across Badkis demands the closest possible reduction of kit and food-supplies, good mule or pony transport, and the precaution of carrying cooked rations; and to these any well-organised Indian cavalry regiment is equal. At the same time, it must be remembered that in the winter months the severity of the weather necessitates tents and a heavy weight of warm clothing for man and horse; that the roads are muddy, heavy, slippery, and apt to be blocked by snowdrifts; and that fodder is then at its scarcest, and sometimes buried under the snow. Experience and local report go to prove that from the 15th December to the 15th March one cannot be sure of fine weather for two days together in Badkis, and consequently a march across it at that season would involve both great hardships and great difficulties. It is obvious that to get over a march anyhow is one thing, and to arrive at the end of a march in a well-organised and efficient state is another. If at the end of such a march half the horses of a regiment were *hors de combat* from exposure and starvation, where is the gain? What is said of cavalry applies equally to a body of mounted infantry. Indeed, now that it has been ascertained that there is throughout Badkis an adequate water-supply available or easily capable of development at intervals within the compass of a reasonable march, there

is no reason why a body of infantry, carrying its own supplies, should not traverse it in fair weather. An infantry regiment, equipped on the same scale as those with which General Phayre proposed (unfortunately for his force, General Roberts disposed otherwise) to relieve Kandahar, would answer the requirements of the case. One of General Phayre's native regiments (the 5th Bombay Native Infantry) on that occasion, notwithstanding the very great heat, marched from [illegible] Chaman to Kandahar without tents; nor was it, [illegible] attended by any unusual amount of sickness.

These remarks have, of course, been made solely with reference to the mobile power and physique of Indian [illegible] cavalry and infantry. The march of European troops [illegible] infantry across Baluchistan would be attended by many more difficulties. The march of the Commissariat must not be compared with that of troops marching under the conditions I have specified above. We [illegible] supplies [illegible] in readiness for [illegible] them. [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

ing up the *nullah* for pheasant, came across the fresh traces of a large tiger—so fresh, that it would appear that he had only just retreated before the sound of our guns. A few days previously, three of us shooting near Maruchak came across a similar but much smaller *pug*. One of the Afghan officers here informed me that at the end of last November, when the Governor of Herat was marching to join Sir P. Lumsden at Panjdeh, some of the sowars of his escort killed a tiger at Kara-tapa in the Khuskh valley. The only marplot of shooting-trips is the weather. It insists on raining or snowing every second or third day. The last time I was out (the party consisted of Sir Peter Lumsden and four others), up the Kalah Wali valley, it began to rain about mid-day just as we reached our covers. Well, we laughed at the rain, and shot on till dusk, returning to our tents tolerably drenched. An hour later it was freezing hard and heavy snow falling. That went on all night, and became so heavy by 10 A.M. the next day that we decided to pack up our traps and make tracks for camp before we were snowed up without provisions. Besides, the poor servants were miserable. We had to camp on wet ground, and the cold was bitter. The wretched Persian mule-drivers, fools that they are, came out without tents. We could not let them sleep out in snow and frost, so they, eighteen in number, huddled in a mass in our small mess-tent. Packing up was a tough job. The tents having first been well soaked with rain, were frozen hard and stiff in the night. They weighed at least 50 per cent heavier than when dry. However, all arrived back at Bala Murghab safe and sound, except one of my servants, who, with the characteristic idiocy of a Hindu, dressed himself on a cold snowy day in the lightest garb he could find, and rode in eighteen miles on a mule. On arrival he was powerless, in fact his feet and hands were frost-bitten. There I found him lying close to the fire in the servants' *kibitka*, a helpless semi-paralysed mass. He was carried to hospital, and *kahars* set on to rub him warm. In four days he was able to move about, thanks to proper remedies being used in time.

The variety of water-birds shot here is considerable. We

have the mallard, gadwall, teal, red-headed pochard, tufted pochard, red-crested pochard, white-eyed and golden-eyed pochard, shoveller, smew, and merganser, besides one or two species not identified. I have heard that the Brahmini duck has been seen here. Obara (*telur*) are plentiful, and one very fine bustard was shot by Mr Rawlins. It may or may not be generally known that the bustard, in common with the skunk and other animals, if not birds, has the power of emitting, when attacked, a fluid of a most offensive odour. As in duty bound, a bird so rare (it differs from the great Indian bustard) was offered up at the shrine of natural history, and laid at the feet of our naturalist in his tent. The bird had been dead some time. Who can tell how it came about? Suddenly, as a group of admiring Englishmen were gazing intently on this truly magnificent bird, an odour, a horrible odour, far worse than that of the sulphur-waters of Harrogate, pervaded the air. The Englishmen all turned tail and ran out, defeated by a stench, gasping for fresh air. I have never seen nor smelt a Chinese stinkpot; but if those weapons of Celestial warfare can rival the secretions of a bustard, then the lords of the pig-tail should possess the best-armed and most invincible army in the world. A day or two later we ate that bustard for breakfast; but it proved somewhat coarse and tasteless. There is no game-bird up here, or indeed anywhere, I think, that surpasses in tenderness and flavour the *siyahsina*, or black-breasted sand-grouse.

This morning we had a great hunt after a wild cat which Dr Weir's greyhounds ran to earth. I rode sharp back to camp and brought back one of Captain Yate's fox-terriers, as well as a bobbery nondescript pack of dogs who seemed to smell a cat in the distance and would follow. By the time I got back, Dr Aitchison had arrived on the scene, and with the aid of his scientific tools the hole was opened up and everything ripe for the fox-terrier. It proved a very shallow hole, and very soon cat and terrier were at it tooth and nail—and did not the latter get it hot! At last, in a momentary lull, the cat bolted out like a flash of lightning, and but for a smart greyhound, which nailed it by the back, would have found

fuge in some other hole. With some difficulty we beat off l the dogs, some of whom, in the intensity of the excitement, orgot the cat and went for each other, and left Captain Yate's ittle fox-terrier Tuppy to fight it out fairly; and it was not ong before eight of pussy's nine lives were extinct. I do not think the ninth ever dies, it only transmigrates.

While on the subject of game and sport, I may mention that the pheasants here, on the first sound of a gun, if feeding in the fields, make off straight for their covers. I was much amused one day, after firing a couple of barrels into a flock of duck on the river, to see pheasant after pheasant come flying in from every side and settle in a patch of reeds and grass within from 50 to 100 yards of me. Poor simple birds! if they had only stayed in the fields they would have been much safer. And yet it was with a fiendish joy that we watched them flying into their destruction. They have a great tenacity of life these pheasants, and such a power of hiding that when they seem barely able to crawl they sometimes succeed in escaping from under the sportsman's very nose—nay, more, from under a dog's nose. Talking of wounded birds escaping, I heard the following story the other day from one of our party who was shooting in the Kalah Wali valley. He had shot a duck, and left it on the ground seemingly dead some yards from the water, while he went off to stalk another flock. Coming back after an interval of about half an hour, to his surprise not a sign of the duck. Hunting about for it, a slight rustle in the reeds caught his ear. Going to the river-bank, what should he see but his duck gaily swimming away across the stream! Having no dog, he refrained fro wasting a cartridge on it. This little anecdote fired anoth of our party with emulation, and elicited the following: I was out snipe-shooting, and after several hours the pa rested for rest's sake or for refreshments. They began cou ing the birds, and one of them seeing a bird move, shouted "Chuck that bird here and I'll put him out of his mise The bird was chucked, and his neck duly wrung, and chucked back towards the counter. I say towards, fo bird, so the story goes, never reached him, but spreadi

wings flew gaily away! As no one felt equal to beating that, we got no more sporting yarns on that occasion.

This is bad weather for camels. They are helpless in mud and slush. If we have bad weather, as is most probable, on our march to the Hari Rud, our camels will give no end of trouble. Riding in from Maruchak some days ago, I saw one that, having slipped and rolled down from the path, lay on its back on the very verge of a straight drop of 30 feet or so into the river-bed. The sensible brute apparently knew what a ticklish position he was in, and lay quite still till his owner could get help and extricate him. A few hundred yards farther on I found another camel in distress. He was hobbled (the two fore-legs tied close together), and with tiny steps was working his way all alone across a ford. No doubt he had often done this before. Somehow, however, he got out of his reckoning, and instead of finding himself opposite the landing-place, he was borne by the strength of the current into a deepish rapid opposite a precipitous part of the bank 20 yards lower down. There he stood for some time, meditating on the situation. Presently two or three Turkoman horsemen came along, and seeing his difficulty, called to him as only camel-owners can call. That decided him. He turned round, and slowly came back the way he went. Perhaps he made a second essay. If so, let us hope he succeeded.

We have all been expressing some sympathy for Captain Peacocke and Mr Merk on their trip to Andkhui and the Oxus. The latest news from them is dated 23d instant at the last-named place. They appear to have met with considerable hardship, cold winds, snow, and severe frost, much the same as we had here, only rather worse. Captain Peacocke, I regret to hear, was affected with snow-blindness for some days. Loss of sight, even temporary, is a serious thing at all times; but when the person affected is engaged in surveying a new country, and collecting information for a reliable report thereon, it is still more inopportune. However, I understand that Captain Peacocke and Mr Merk have thoroughly succeeded in carrying out the object for which they were sent, despite drawbacks and obstacles. Presumably

hey are on their way back by this time. It is about fifteen narches from Kilif *viâ* Maimena to Bala Murghab. We may probably look for their arrival here about 12th February—that is, if we are still here then.

Since the arrival of the Amir's *poshtins* ten days ago, our mess-table on a cold night has been quite gay, at least in point of colouring. Passing over those presented to the chief and assistant Commissioners, which were certainly very handsome, in fact defy criticism, let us glance at those designed for humbler mortals. It turned out that there were not quite enough for all of us, so we decided to have a lottery. That increased the fun, especially for those who did not draw blanks, and for the subalterns who would have been out of it if claims had been based on seniority. For my part I quite agreed with the subaltern who suggested that here was an admirable opening for generosity and self-denial. What more becoming than that the seniors, in the plenitude of their wealth, should waive their claim in favour of their juniors of more straitened means? But they did not seem to see it. So we had a lottery, and some went away therefrom arrayed in fine raiment, and others went away sorrowing to don their old *poshtins*. They just came in time for our last spell of cold, when the thermometer registered about 30° of frost on the night of the 27th. That night our mess-table was surrounded with some twenty or more oriental figures surmounted by faces English and Scotch, Irish and Teutonic. The robe were all colours, from the mixed tints of Cashmere shawl an the gorgeous hues of Bokhara silk, to simple broadcloths black, slate, light blue, dark green, and plum colour. T furs were equally varied; but not being a furrier, I am a loss to give a name to most of them. Some of them were tainly very handsome.

9th Februa

And why are we off westward? Why, at least, is the mission bound for Gulran? Till recently it was gen believed that when her Majesty's chief and assistant missioners with a small escort moved to Sarakhs, the b the Commission would remain here until such time

plan of operations had been arranged with the Russian Commissioner. But of late M. de Blowitz's telegrams and the frequent rumours of the disfavour with which this Commission is regarded by the Russian Government, or at least by a very strong party in it, have led those of us who depend for our information almost entirely on the reports of the press, to conclude that the end may not be far off. It is doubtless owing to the prevalence of this belief that the topic of our probable return-route to India has frequently of late been brought on the *tapis*. Such discussions appear to be quite premature, so a repetition of them now would be useless. We are, however, all unanimous in one thing, and that is, in the hope that we may not be directed to return the way we came.[1] The unknown is ever enveloped in a halo of attraction and excitement. To traverse a desert and make a forced march through a semi-hostile country once is all well enough; but to do it again, when the charms of novelty and uncertainty, and the curiosity born therefrom, no longer mitigate the monotony of toil and hardship, is a very different thing. We started from Nushki animated with the sense of an arduous task to perform, and the determination to do it well; and although, if we were ordered to return the same way, there is not one of us but would do his duty manfully, the keenness and elasticity of spirit would be wanting. It would be just the difference between doing a duty for duty's sake and making a pleasure of a duty. However, why dwell on this dreary prospect? What could any one gain by a bad *réchauffé* of our march from Quetta to Herat, important as were its results in the first instance? Are not Balkh and Bamian, the Hindu Kush and the upper waters of the Oxus, awaiting our surveyors? Would it be impossible or impolitic to try and open up one or more of the routes from Badakhshan and Wakhan into Kashmir? Should we not, after our many

[1] Nevertheless the "return party," in December 1885 and January 1886, followed this same route, except that they marched from the Helmund to Nushki *vid* Chagai, and not, as in October 1884, *vid* Kani and Shah Ismail. Some think the Chagai route preferable, but I think it probabl
route has special advantages at certain seasons. The water-suppl
at all times the chief consideration.

wanderings, deem the Happy Valley a perfect Paradise? Or mayhap the Amir, if we map out a satisfactory frontier for him, might wish to see us in Kabul, and thank us personally for our efforts in his behalf—especially if the British Government will assure him clearly and emphatically that it will defend that frontier from the machinations of Russia and Russia's cat's-paws.[1]

In the meantime our way lies westward. It will be obvious to all that Bala Murghab is, as regards telegraphic communication with London *viâ* Mashhad, a most out-of-the-way place. It positively takes a month to get an answer from the Foreign Office. This is the ostensible reason why the Commissioner is bent on getting to Gulran without delay. We expect to halt there some weeks. Our supplies at Gulran will be obtained from the Herat valley, Ghorian, &c. During the last three days the weather has changed so much for the better, that we can only regret that we are not already on the move. That, however, is out of the question, for several reasons. First of all, the Afghan authorities cannot lay out supplies for us without due notice. Secondly, the transport, which during the past two months has been busily employed bringing in supplies for our use, has to be collected. Some of the camels are still away at Kadis, in the Firuzkuhi country, and their long absence would point to the supposition that they are snowed up. Yesterday, the 16th instant, was mentioned as the probable date of our departure from here. To-day it is thought that all will be ready by the 12th. A caravan of baggage and stores for despatch to India has first to be got rid of, and then, in conformity with the plan adopted on our march hither, some 300 to 400 camels, with all the heavy tents and stores, will be sent on one day before the main body, in charge of Ressaldar-Major Baha-ud-din.

Colonel Ridgeway, accompanied by Captains Maitland,

[1] The Hazarajat, Balkh, and Bamian have been thoroughly explored by Captains Maitland and Talbot during the past winter. Till recently it has been reported that the A. B. C. would return to India, part *viâ* Kabul and part *viâ* Badakhshan and Kashmir. It is now said that the whole party will return by the latter route.

Yate, and De Laessoe, started for Panjdeh on the 6th—as luck would have it, just at the commencement of the fine weather. A day or two previously, Sir Peter Lumsden received from the Government of India a copy of a telegram from the Secretary of State for India, congratulating Colonel Ridgeway and all who accompanied him on their successful march to Herat. The message also contained some words of commendation from Lord Dufferin. Those who took part in this march are perhaps apt now to underrate its difficulties and risks. Everything passed off so smoothly that it is difficult now to realise that we crossed 225 miles of desert naturally devoid of water, food, and forage, and some 450 miles of country in which we were liable to attack at any moment. That no catastrophe occurred is the best proof of the high merit of the performance; and yet, paradoxical as it may seem, it is that very absence of catastrophe that tends to depreciate it, not only in the eyes of the actors themselves, but also in those of the onlookers. People are prone to argue that absence of mishap implies absence of difficulty and danger. It must not, at the same time, be overlooked that much is due to the Amir and his officials. One of the native *attachés*, a Kabuli by birth, gave it me as his opinion that the Amir, in selecting Kazi Saad-ud-din as his representative with us on our march, had chosen a man who, more than almost any other, was calculated to exercise influence and control over the Afghan tribes through whose territories we had to pass. He is the son of the Khan-i-Mulla Khan, the highest religious official in Afghanistan. He is, however, by no means a favourite with those British officers who see and know most of him.

To-day has been the first really fine day we have had for about a fortnight. The sky was clear, and the sun shone merrily. The cloudless starry sky we saw last night was a harbinger of to-day's fineness. Four or five days without rain or snow had permitted the soil to dry. I got out my horse and had a most enjoyable ride to the mouth of the Darband (gorge), some nine miles south of camp. The ground was firm and yet springy—perfect for a gallop.

green tinge pervaded everything. Spring must be at hand. On the hill tops and slopes was seen many a peasant busy with the plough. What magnificent soil this is! Hill and dale, all alike fertile, brown, friable mould. And what a curious method these Aimaks have of ploughing! They first design a succession of prolonged serpentine windings as a framework, and then they proceed to fill in the interstices. On all sides tiny yellow crocuses were peeping up above the soil. On reaching the Darband I noticed a mud or stone tower overhanging the right bank of the river. This is one of those watch-towers from which, but a year or two ago, a vigilant look-out for Turkomans was kept. Few districts have suffered more from them than the valley of the Murghab. Nor was the road from here through Maimena and Andkhui to the Oxus by any means safe from them. See Vambéry's Travels and Grodekoff's Ride to Herat. Nay more, even now the Kara Turkomans raid round Andkhui. Several raids have been made during the past winter. These Karas are said to be a branch of the Ersaris. As for the Alieli Turkomans, they only exist in imagination.[1] We shall find the Andkhuiese soliciting the protection of Russian troops from these freebooters, unless the Liberal Ministry makes up its mind sharp that something more than British gold ought to be seen on the north frontier of Afghanistan. If these Kara Turkomans are not checked, they will produce mischief hereafter. They appear to reside in "No-man's land," somewhere in or about the Dasht-i-Chul—that Dasht-i-Chul which ought to make an excellent frontier between Afghan and Russian territories in Central Asia. In Persia—*i.e.*, that part of it exposed to Turkoman raids—a complete series of watch-towers, or rather beacon-towers, used to be kept up, so complete that within an hour of sighting an *alaman*, information thereof could be sent from the most distant watch-tower over miles of country to the garrison town. They also appear to have had some method of signalling the strength of the *alaman*.

[1] The Alieli section was formerly located hereabouts, but is now settled in the north of Khorasan.

Towards evening Mr Merk and Captain Peacocke arrived. They have been absent since the 1st January. They and their following had to put up with much discomfort and hardship, owing to the inclemency of the weather. Captain Peacocke was for some days affected with snow-blindness; but nevertheless, despite foul weather and bodily ailments, he has effected an excellent survey of the country traversed. It was Mr Merk's duty to collect such evidence as would bear upon the question of the delimitation of the Russo-Afghan frontier; and that, I understand, has been satisfactorily done. Owing to the intense cold, several of their servants were frost-bitten. During this intense cold all the servants got double rations of *ghee*, meat, tea, and sugar. One of them, it is feared, may lose his toes. Another servant has returned completely paralysed—a condition attributed to a fall from a horse, but more probably traceable to the great cold.[1] Captain Peacocke's thermometer only registered as low as zero; consequently the actual degree of cold could not be ascertained. That it was considerably below zero, however, is certain. While marching in the daytime, handkerchiefs were found to freeze in the breast-pocket. On the 26th and 27th ultimo, the same days that General Lumsden and party were out shooting in the Kalah Wali valley, and experienced such unpleasant weather, Merk and Peacocke also had a very rough time of it on the banks of the Oxus. Towards midnight on the 26th their *kibitkas* were blown down, and they had to seek refuge in an Uzbek or Turkoman hut. Fortunately the elements were their only enemies. Everywhere the Afghan officials and inhabitants received them courteously and hospitably, and in the towns they were, as a rule, accommodated in houses. The coldest weather they experienced was from 7th to 9th January, just at the time when the thermometer here went down to zero. During the heavy fall of snow from the 4th to the 7th, they were in some danger, and had thoughts of turning back, as their guides and escort declined to proceed. Fortunately the snow ceased on the 7th, and they were able to go on. About this

[1] He died subsequently.

time they came across the dead body of a Turkoman lying in the snow, who had evidently died of cold a day or two previously. Another dead body they found, had evidently fallen a victim to heat and thirst some months before. Despite the trying weather that we have experienced since the 2d of January, intense cold and continued rain and snow, there has been very little sickness. It is a great thing to be well housed and warmly clothed. And yet the Hindu never fails to show his superlative contempt for the warm clothing lavished upon him, by persistently refusing to wear it. He has a *poshtin*, but leaves it in his *kibitka* when he walks abroad. He has stout ammunition-boots and *poshtin* socks, but he prefers running about in the snow and slush in his stocking-soles or with bare feet. But they don't die somehow. The only death that has occurred in camp is that of a sepoy of the 20th Panjab Infantry.

10th February.

Sir Peter Lumsden this morning reviewed his escort, cavalry and infantry. Did he wish to assure himself that they would compare favourably with the Russian troops? I do not think he need have any doubts on that score, whether for dress, bearing, drill, or discipline. Unfortunately it would seem that but a small portion of this escort is likely to come in contact with the Russians, if indeed we do ever see them. It is surely an extraordinary admission on their part that, as reported in the London telegrams of 9th January, they are apprehensive of the consequences of the presence of two large Commissions on the northern frontier of Afghanistan. What do they fear? The only apparent ground for their fears lies in the unsettled temper of their own Central Asian subjects. It is no secret that the Turkomans are no lovers of the new *régime.* Does the Russian Government fear that the presence of 500 British soldiers on the borders of their trans-Caspian annexations might cause the storm of discontent and disaffection to burst? And yet we find Grodekoff asserting, in his account of his ride from Samarcand to Herat, that the inhabitants of the khanates, from Balkh to Maimena, were all most desirous of emancipation from Afghan rule, and

prayed for the day when Russia would fulfil their desires and take them under the ægis of its imperial might and justice. How does this assertion tally with the fact that the Saruks sought Afghan protection as soon as the occupation of Merv gave them cause to apprehend that Panjdeh would not long evade Russian territorial greed? There is another opinion to which Grodekoff gives vent that is equally erroneous. He says that Merv is not the key of Herat; and alleges, as his ground for holding this opinion, that the roads between the Murghab valley and the passes over the Baba and Kaitu range (I mean the range north of Herat, styled by some geographers Paropamisus, and of which the several peaks are known locally as Band-i-Baba, Kara-Kaitu, and Siyahbubak) are quite impracticable for troops. Now our recent march alone is sufficient to prove the fallacy of this statement. It is also known that two batteries of Afghan artillery, mounted on carriages, have within the last two years marched from Herat to Maimena by some route passing through or close to Kalah-i-nau. But perhaps Colonel Grodekoff is not aware that the best road from Merv to Herat leaves the Murghab near Pul-i-khishti, follows the Khuskh valley up to Kara-tapa, and thence crosses into the Herat valley by the Ardewan Pass. Every one who has seen the Ardewan Pass agrees that the road through it is comparatively easy. On this route there is no scarcity of water. Supplies are at present unprocurable anywhere, except fuel, and grazing for camels, and to a certain extent for horses. This means that food and grain must be carried—no great obstacle surely. One feels disposed to doubt the sincerity of this published opinion of Grodekoff's. Were it only true, it would be no small gain to Afghan and British interests.

So far indeed is the British press from adopting an exaggerative tone, that it could be wished that both press and public would evince a stronger feeling and deeper interest in this subject. There seems every reason to fear that the Gladstonian Ministry will not even now oppose with requisite firmness the immoderate demands of Russia. If that be so,

the sooner the British people disavow the policy of their present Ministry the better. Russia has not the faintest suspicion of a right to any of the "debatable" territory which she now claims. What prescriptive right has she to rule the Turkomans? For many years they have owned allegiance to no potentate; therefore the Russians cannot even plead that they are, or were, the subjects of their feudatories, the Khan of Khiva or the Amir of Bokhara—certainly not as regards the Saruks. Such of these independent Turkomans as the Russians have subdued, let them rule. But they have no right to claim sovereignty over Turkomans who are Afghan subjects. It is commonly maintained by them that the Hindu Kush, and not the Oxus, is both historically, ethnographically, and geographically the natural boundary between Afghanistan and Russia's Central Asian possessions. Such an assertion is utterly unfounded. Since the days of Dost Mohammed, if not before, the Oxus has, except during certain periods of internal disturbance, been the northern boundary of Afghanistan. All the petty khanates forming Afghan Turkistan—viz., Kunduz, Khulm, Balkh, Akcha, Andkhui, Shibargan, Sar-i-pul, and Maimena—have as a rule acknowledged and paid tribute to the Amirs, except when the latter have been obliged to devote all their energies to the defence of their throne from internal assaults, and consequently to relax their grip on their outlying provinces. Afghan Turkistan was tributary to Ahmed Shah, but under the laxer rule of Taimur Shah some of the khanates became virtually independent. In or about 1850, Dost Mohammed re-established Afghan rule there and in Badakhshan. There is no doubt that the petty potentates of these khanates have amused themselves by coquetting with the courts of Kabul and Bokhara, and tried to play the one off against the other. From the death of Dost Mohammed tc the accession of Abdur Rahman—*i.e.*, from 1863 to 1882—the peace and unity of Afghanistan have been repeatedly disturbed by struggles between brother and brother, uncle and nephew cousin and cousin; and the khanates north of the Hindu Kush became in consequence at times practically indeper

dent. It is true that the Amir of Bokhara in 1869 made a military demonstration on the Oxus with a view to enforcing his claim to several of these petty khanates; but ultimately his army was withdrawn, and the Oxus recognised as the boundary between Bokhara and Afghanistan. No sooner, however, had Abdur Rahman driven Ayub from Kandahar and Herat and consolidated his power at Kabul, than he not only reasserted his sway in Afghan Turkistan and Badakhshan, but also annexed Shignan and Wakhan. It would appear, therefore, that from a historical point of view Russia has not the faintest claim to the territory between the Oxus and Hindu Kush. Geographically a river is just as good a boundary as a chain of mountains. As for ethnographical claims, they are mainly a matter of sentiment, and unless supported by force of arms, deserve to be ignored. Doubtless Slavonic Russia is burning to unite in one great empire all the Slav States of Europe; but until Germany and Austria become effete, the fire of Panslavism will have to burn in secret. The dream of one vast Slavonic and Mongolian empire is, it must be allowed, a splendid aspiration; but while England, Germany, and Austria possess the will and power to dispel its illusions, it must fain feed itself on its own sweetness.

11th February.

To-morrow morning we start for Gulran. To-day the convoy for Quetta and the heavy baggage were despatched. We cross the Murghab at Maruchak. Some ten days ago, Captain Yate was sent down the river to report on the fords. After examining them all, he decided that that of Maruchak alone was adapted to the passage of a force such as ours. In reality, however, it is not so much the ford itself as the [illegible] of the land across which the ford must be approached [illegible] presents difficulties. The approaches even of the [illegible] ford are bad enough, but have been materially [illegible] ramping the banks. We leave the Murghab [illegible] where near Band-i-Nadiri, some 10 miles north [illegible] and strike across to the Khushk valley. Our [illegible] complete as I at first imagined it would be. [illegible]

way's party has lessened our number by four; while Captain Peacocke, who seems to regard rest as a superfluous luxury, is off alone to Khushk and the Kaitu or Band-i-Baba range. It is well for us to make the most of our time and see all we can, for who knows what may lie in the future? Yesterday Captain Gore and Mr Talbot rejoined, having been away nearly a week encamped in the Darband waiting for a fine clear day. On the 9th they were rewarded for their patience, and ascending the snowy heights (said to be about 3000 feet higher than our camp) west of the Darband, succeeded in completing the task they had in view—viz., to connect their survey with that of Major Holdich. The Tirband has been capped with snow for six weeks past. It is a fine sight. Some of the peaks are over 9000 feet high. Surveyor Imam Sharif will march straight from here across to the Khushk river at Hauz-i-Khan, following some comparatively unfrequented route.

It may perhaps be worth while to state here what information I have been able to collect about the country between the Murghab and the Oxus. The area, of which I have some knowledge (based mainly on information obtained from Captain Peacocke and Mr Merk), embraces the petty states of Maimena, Andkhui, Akcha, and Shibargan, the Oxus from Kilif through Khwaja Salar (not Khwaja Salih, as it has hitherto been styled) to Kham-i-ab, and the tract situated between the main road from Bala Murghab to Maimena on the south to the edge of the Dasht-i-Chul on the north. By the by, it appears that the name of *chul* is not applied in local parlance to sandy desert, but to the expanse of light, clayey, undulating hills and downs that extend from the foot of the northern spurs of the Tirband-i-Turkistan to the edge of the sandy tract that lies between Merv and the Oxus at Karki. The settlements on the Murghab—viz., Maruchak, Panjdeh, and Yulatan—are connected with those of Afghan Turkistan—viz., Maimena, Daulatabad, and Andkhui—by direct routes across this *chul*. Not that these routes are, at least now, such as would be readily

selected by a large caravan, or be suitable for the march of even a small body of troops. It appears that there are wells to be found at intervals, greater or less, all over this *chul*. These wells are said to be, as a rule, from 50 to 60 feet in depth, and lined with brick. As they are unprovided with drinking-troughs, or even the traces of their former existence, it may be concluded that they are intended, not for watering flocks, but for the use of casual travellers. The water in them is brackish naturally, and from stagnating in the wells, which are rarely used, becomes very foul. There is no doubt that these routes have been made use of even in recent years by caravans seeking to avoid the main road through Andkhui and Maimena, and so escape the heavy dues exacted by the rulers of those petty states. How exorbitant those dues were, any one who has read Vambéry's Travels knows. The risks attendant on travelling by these routes are sufficiently attested by the fact that travellers often perish in the midst of this inhospitable waste. Nor are these risks confined to any one season. In summer and winter alike the traveller is exposed to them. He may die of thirst under a broiling sun, and he may perish of cold in the snow's embrace—fatal and yet so seductive to the lost weary wayfarer. For the Turkoman, the Uzbek, and the Aimak, who thinks a change of wearing apparel a superfluous luxury, and carries his bedding strapped on the saddle behind him, water in a *mussuk*, and food for himself and grain for his steed in a saddle-bag, such a journey presents perhaps but small difficulties. This, however, is calculating without the chapter of accidents. Let him but lose the track, and how shall he find it again in that intricate waste of undulations? He may have water enough for himself for two or three days, but his horse cannot work without water, and must ere long fall down exhausted. And then he must leave it, and struggle along burdened with his own water and food. And even if he be so fortunate as to come across a well, suppose it be dry, or that he has abandoned his 60 feet of rope necessary for reaching the water! Or even, given him the water, his stock of food will inevitably fail him ere he can reach the habitations of man; for the road

is long, and he may be nearly 100 miles from all human aid when his evil fate overtakes him. And in the winter, when the snow is deep on the ground, and obscures the track and obstructs the vision, blocks the road in drifts, and with its pitiless glare produces snow-blindness; when the cold is intense and fuel is nowhere to be found; when the grass and scrub that should afford nutriment to the horse is buried deep in the snow,—then, indeed, may the creeping chill of despair combine with the benumbing cold of the elements and bid the traveller cease to hope. What avails it then that snow lies around for miles?—snow for which the parched traveller in summer would give a fortune. It is not snow he wants to slake his thirst, but fuel to restore vitality to his numbed limbs. Such are some of the dangers to be encountered traversing this *chul*. Naturally the inhabitants of the districts bordering on it are, as a rule, careful so to time their journeyings across it as to reduce these risks to a minimum. Still, year by year not a few travellers gasp out their last breath on its parched steppes, or sink wearily to die amid its trackless snows. The people divide the winter here into two periods of forty days each, called respectively *chilla-i-kalan* and *chilla-i-khurd*, or the great and lesser forty-days. The former lasts from 20th December (approximately) to the 31st January, and the latter from 1st February to about 10th March. During these periods they consider it unsafe to cross the *chul* (steppe).

In journeying across such a country the stages naturally depend on the position of the wells and of the localities where fuel and fodder are procurable; and it is seemingly to such places alone that names are attached. Starting from Maruchak, we reach the first wells at Gala-Chashma, some 20 miles north-east of the starting-point. From Gala-Chashma to Karabil, the next well, is about 27 miles. Karabil is situated on a broad level plateau, 20 to 25 miles in width, and some 2500 feet above sea-level; which stretches from the foo of the Tirband-i-Turkistan into the desert, and forms th watershed between the Murghab and the Oxus. Here fuel i to be found in the form of scrub and low bushes. The drai

age from this plateau and its outlying spurs collects in a valley named Aghzking, and a few miles above Karawul-khana joins the valley which carries to the Murghab the drainage from Chahar Shamba and Kalah Wali. The river Kizar, that we see in the maps disappearing to the northward in the desert, is purely mythical. What a godsend it would be if it did but exist! From Karabil there are two routes—one to Andkhui and the other to Daulatabad, an Ersari settlement on the Shirin Tagao, some 35 miles south by west of Andkhui. The whole country is of an undulating nature. From Karabil to Daulatabad is a distance of some 90 miles, and wells are found at intervals of from 15 to 20 miles. The names given to some of these wells are Yarghan Chakli, Kiyamat-i-Shur, and Yarghan Kui. At Kiyamat-i-Shur scrub and bushes suitable for fuel grow. The fodder-supply depends on the season of the year: it is most plentiful in spring, after the winter rains and snows. This route was taken recently by the party under Captain Peacocke and Mr Merk, consisting of about 100 men, 90 horses and ponies, and 95 camels. They started from Maruchak, carrying with them three days' water in *mussuks* and three days' fuel. After that they depended for water on the snow, and for fuel on the resources of the *chul*. Fortunately neither failed them. This was in January, when the cold was most intense, and snow and rain fell every second or third day. The entire distance by this route from Maruchak to Daulatabad is about 135 miles. Just below Daulatabad the waters of the Ab-i-Maimena (which has been joined higher up by its affluents, the Narin, and the streams from the Almar and Kaisar valleys) and the Shirin Tagao meet, and flow thence towards Andkhui under the name of Ab-i-Andkhui. At Daulatabad is a strong well-built fort belonging to the Ersaris, who both cultivate a large area of land in the valley of the Shirin Tagao, and graze their flocks on the *chul* to a distance of some 25 miles from their settlement. A radius of about the same length represents roughly the distance up to which the inhabitants of Andkhui, Maimena, and all the Uzbek settlements on the highroad from Maimena to Bala Murghab, use the *chul* for pastoral purposes.

From Daulatabad to Andkhui it is two marches following the banks of the Ab-i-Andkhui, which is said to be in breadth about 25 feet, and in depth about five. The first stage is to Chap Gudar, 14 miles, and thence to Andkhui, 20 more. The valley throughout is level, and the soil excellent; and yet it is completely deserted. To enter into a separate description of Andkhui, Akcha, Shibargan, and Maimena would be useless, seeing that they are all said to be of the same type: the same encircling walls, more or less in ruins; the same citadel, not quite so ruined as the walls; the same mud-houses and narrow streets; and the same bazaar, with the same style of shops, and the same kinds of wares and goods in greater or less profusion. The bulk of their inhabitants are Uzbeks, with a sprinkling of Turkomans, and probably some Jews and Hindus. The population of Maimena itself is estimated at 3000 families, and of the Maimena state at 20,000. Those of the other three states are much less. It is curious that while the three latter are surrounded with trees and walled gardens, the country around the former should be destitute of both. Between Maimena and Bokhara, by the route of Andkhui and Karki, there is an extensive carrying trade. From Andkhui to Maimena the road presents no difficulties as regards the configuration of the country, fuel, grazing, water, and supplies. From Karki to Andkhui the road is by no means so easy. The oasis around the latter town extends some 13 miles to the north of it, where the river-water becomes completely exhausted by being drawn off for irrigation. To reach from Karki the edge of this oasis, first some 30 miles of sandy desert covered with *saxaul* (a species of tamarisk which is found all over the Central Asian deserts, and which the Russians found most valuable as fuel, not only for troops and domestic purposes, but also for their steamboats on the Aral and the Oxus, until naphtha-burning engines were introduced, and petroleum-dregs brought from the shores of the Caspian), and then about 20 miles of undulating *chul*, have to be traversed. Vambéry, if I remember rightly, came by this road, and describes it, though not perhaps in detail. There are, of course, wells along it near which caravans

bivouac. The 20 miles of *chul* is simply desert from want of water to irrigate it. The latitude where the northern edge of this vast undulating steppe (*chul*) merges into the drift-sand of the desert, may be roughly represented by a line drawn from a point a little north of Balkh, and thence passing some 10 or 15 miles north of Akcha and Andkhui to Sari Yazi on the Murghab. North of this line, to the Oxus, stretches the desert of drift-sand, which, between Kilif and Akcha only some 18 miles broad, increases steadily in breadth as it extends westward. There is also another caravan-road from Andkhui to Kham-i-ab on the Oxus, a distance of about 60 miles, divided into three stages—viz., Bulut-kak, 24 miles; Jar-kuduk, 18 miles; and Kham-i-ab, 18 miles. The word *kak*, a component of Bulut-kak, is the name given to tanks constructed along these caravan-routes for the purpose of collecting snow-water. The water of the wells is invariably brackish. At Jar-kuduk there is an Afghan frontier outpost located in a small fort, the land around which is now being brought under cultivation. This fort, it is said, was formerly used as an Afghan convict-prison. The distance from Karki to Kilif, passing through Kham-i-ab, Dali, and Khwaja Salar, is about 70 miles. The trough of the river Oxus here is of great breadth, and in its centre lie at this season great mud-flats, which, during the floods which commence in April and subside in September, are entirely or mostly submerged. On either bank of the river, between the flood-level and the desert, is a strip of very fertile soil varying from two to three miles in breadth. On both banks are settled the Ersari Turkomans, who live, some in *kibitkas*, some in mud-houses, and cultivate the fertile strip above mentioned. The spring crops (wheat and barley) depend mainly on the rainfall for arriving at maturity, while for the autumn crops (*jowar*) the land is irrigated from flood-water canals. Silk-worm farming is an important branch of the Ersari industry. The mulberry-trees for the nutriment of the caterpillars are grown along the banks of the canal and round every field. The raw silk is exported to Bokhara, and there manufactured into those shawls, handkerchiefs, and webs of silk which are well known throughout the East. The Ersaris are said to be

prosperous and wealthy. Farther to the north-east, near Charjui, dwell the Kara Turkomans, a section of the Ersari. They are the only Turkomans who still raid. We have heard of several of their raids round Andkhui this winter. As for the Alieli, whom our maps consign vaguely to the broad bosom of the desert, they are found to be an absolute fiction. Like the Tekkes and Saruks, the Ersaris are great manufacturers of carpeting; but to my mind the articles they turn out are decidedly inferior to those produced by the two former. Both for taste in colour and for soft velvetiness of texture, the Saruks, I think, easily bear away the palm. The Tekke colouring is too vivid; but it must be admitted that the texture of their best productions is wonderfully close and beautifully soft. They seem, however, to produce a large quantity of inferior articles; and this may be attributed to the fact that the Russian annexation of Merv has opened the markets of Europe to the Tekke industries. Almost every carpet from a Saruk loom that I have seen has been good of its kind.

In the meantime the Commission is making very creditable progress towards spoiling the markets. I believe I am not exaggerating if I state that for the purchase of horses, carpets, and jewellery not less than Rs. 10,000 have flowed from the pockets of the Commission into the coffers of the Saruks of Panjdeh. In this sum I do not include the ordinary everyday trifles of every description, food, dress, &c., that are purchased in the camp bazaar by all ranks and classes. It would indeed be strange if the Commission were not popular here. Whether it be the Government or a private individual who has business transactions with these people, the latter are sure of making a good bargain. When we march from here we leave behind us some 250 *kibitkas*, purchased by Government for about Rs. 16,000. These, after seven weeks' use, are about to be handed over to the Amir's officials here, to be disposed of as they think fit.

The golden key has seemingly become the emblem of a settled and traditional British policy. Will it keep the gates of Herat locked? If it were permissible to lay a wager on a subject of such vital interest to India, I would be disposed to stake

my money on the Russian pick-lock, composed of two instruments—diplomacy and military force. It would appear more than probable, from the attitude of the Russian Government, the delay in withdrawing the outpost from Pul-i-Khatun, the efforts made to gain a hold on Panjdeh, and the uncourteous dilatoriness of the Russian Commissioner, that the present is deemed a favourable opportunity for forcing the hand of the British Government in this quarter. Russia sees England in difficulties in Egypt, and on bad terms with France and Germany, and very naturally proposes to take advantage of her embarrassments. From her behaviour now, it is perhaps not difficult to detect the game that she has from the first had in view. Unable, or deeming it unadvisable, to refuse point-blank to send a Commission and define a frontier, she consented to England's proposal, trusting to time and circumstances to aid her in evading the consummation of the undertaking. It would appear that time and circumstances have answered only too well to her hopes. At the very time when the frontier should be fixed, she sees England involved in difficulties on all hands. Now is her time to put on the screw, and she consequently raises objections to all England's proposals and demands; and as the work of the two Commissions cannot proceed until these preliminary negotiations are concluded, it becomes a matter of indefinite uncertainty when that work will begin.

But to return to Afghan Turkistan. The population of the oasis of Andkhui is estimated at 3000 families, almost all Uzbeks. The garrison and governor (by name Abdul Hamid Khan) are Afghan. The semi-ruined town-walls enclose large unoccupied spaces, a proof that it was once more populous than it is now. There are no villages round the city, but numerous walled gardens in which the well-to-do Uzbeks live in summer. Agriculture, silk-worm farming, and the carrying trade between Maimena and Bokhara, are the principal occupations of the inhabitants. The fields round the town are still dotted with towers of refuge, mementos of the now almost bygone age of the Turkoman raids. Kilif, on the Oxus, is described as a miniature Attock. On the Afghan

side cliffs overhang the stream, and reappear on the Bokhara side in a rock on which is perched the small fort in which resides the Bokhara Governor of Kilif, an old man named Toktamish Beg. The river, which lower down at Khwaja Salar and Kham-i-ab flows in several channels in a flat bed and is flanked by marshy ground flooded in the hot weather, is here gathered into a single stream—a fine volume of water some 350 yards wide. Kilif is on the main caravan-route between Bokhara and Balkh, Mazar-i-sharif, Akcha, Sar-i-pul, and Shibargan, and is consequently an important ferry.

The establishment consists of six boats (flat-bottomed punts) about 45 feet long and 15 wide, with pointed stem and stern: these ply between two small natural harbours formed by spurs of the cliffs projecting into the stream, and are towed across by a single horse, attached to the prow by a rope fastened to a collar which is firmly fixed to a girth passing round the horse's body behind the shoulder. By this contrivance the horse when in the water is suspended, and being relieved of his own weight, has nothing to do but kick out. He is guided by a bridle from the boat; when the river is in flood two horses are harnessed to the boat. Akcha is distant from Kilif about 30 miles. The road, crossing a strip of desert some 18 miles in width, strikes the northern edge of the Akcha oasis. Here, too, is an Afghan garrison and governor, Abdul Ghain Khan, brother of the Governor of Andkhui. The water-supply of this town is said to be brought in two large canals from the Band-i-Barbar on the Balkh river north of Balkh. Pheasants are found here. Shibargan is distant about 35 miles from Akcha, and is reached in two marches of about 20 and 15 miles respectively. The edge of the Shibargan cultivation is touched at the end of the first march at a place named Chichki. Shibargan is also occupied by an Afghan garrison. Here, as around Maimena, much of the cultivation depends solely on the rainfall, whereas at Andkhui and Akcha the rainfall is insufficient for that purpose. The road hence to Maimena crosses the *chul* for 45 miles (two marches of 25 and 20 miles respectively) to Khairabad, a settlement situated on the

Shirin Tagao, seven miles south of Daulatabad; then for some 25 miles follows the banks of the Shirin Tagao, and finally turns off in a south-west direction to Maimena, which is distant about 10 miles from the river. The valley of the Shirin from Khairabad upwards is well cultivated and comparatively thickly populated. It will be seen that our present maps are far from correct here. For instance, the positions of Khairabad and Daulatabad are reversed, and the distance of Maimena from the Shirin Tagao is more than doubled. Maimena is ruled by a hereditary Uzbek chief with the title of Wali, but is now held by a strong Afghan garrison composed of two regiments of infantry, a regiment of cavalry, and a battery of artillery. It is the largest and most important of the petty states west of Balkh, where resides Sardar Mohammed Isa Khan, Governor of Afghan Turkistan, a cousin of the Amir. Maimena has on more than one occasion defied the power of the Amirs and sustained protracted sieges by Afghan troops. A brief summary of the recent annals of Maimena may be of interest. The present Wali, Mir Husain Khan, having put to death his brother, succeeded to the chiefship some twenty years ago. In 1868, Maimena was unsuccessfully besieged by Abdur Rahman Khan, the present Amir. At that time Sher Ali was holding Herat, and Abdur Rahman, who was advancing from Balkh to attack him there, was obliged to take Maimena before he could advance farther. Meanwhile the successes gained by Sher Ali and his son, Mohammed Yakub, had placed the former on the throne of Kabul; so Abdur Rahman withdrew from before Maimena to Balkh. Before he departed he is said to have exchanged Korans with Mir Husain Khan, and the two swore to stand by one another in the hour of need: a curious compact as between two men who just before had been engaged in active warfare the one against the other. After his visit to Umballa in 1869, Sher Ali proceeded to consolidate his power in Afghanistan. Sardar Mohammed Alam Khan was sent to take Maimena; but it was only after a six months' siege that he succeeded in capturing it. A breach having been effected, the place was

stormed by the Afghan force, and an indiscriminate massacre and loot seems to have followed. Mir Husain Khan was sent a prisoner to Kabul, and replaced by his relative, Dilawar Khan. When Abd-ul-Kudus took Herat for the present Amir in 1882, he marched thither through the Hazarajat, thus avoiding Maimena. It was only last spring that a force was sent to reduce it. What Sardar Abdur Rahman failed to do by force in 1868, and Sher Ali with great difficulty effected a year or two later, Amir Abdur Rahman brought about by intrigue in a few weeks. The strong party within the town adverse to Dilawar Khan, taking advantage of his unpopularity with the mass of the people, intrigued against him, and soon compelled him to surrender. Mir Husain Khan was then reappointed to the chiefship, and Dilawar removed to Kabul. The Wali, however, is at present a mere nominal ruler. There is an Afghan Resident there, and in his hands is vested the real authority. The distance from Maimena to Bala Murghab is slightly under 100 miles. The marches are —Almar 17, Kaisar 18, Chahar Shamba 18, Kalah Wali 20, Bala Murghab 24. The watershed between the Oxus and the Murghab is just east of Chichaktu, from which place to Kalah Wali there is continuous cultivation, the land being irrigated from the stream, which becomes exhausted about six miles west of Kalah Wali. From these districts a great part of the supplies used by us at Bala Murghab were brought. There is a settlement of Saruks at Kalah Wali. The other settlements are mostly of Uzbeks. Although their lands are now all irrigated artificially, there is no reason why rain-crops, as at Maimena, Bala Murghab, Kalah-i-nau, Khushk, and elsewhere, should not be produced. The soil is wonderfully fertile. The valley from Kalah Wali to Karawulkhana, some 20 to 25 miles in length and a mile in width, is admirably adapted for cultivation even by rain. There are also some small springs in it. The traces of a former town of some extent may be seen in it, some eight miles west of Kalah Wali.

Maimena is an important trade-centre, with an extensive bazaar, in which English goods are said to predominate over Russian. The green tea sold there is mostly imported

through Bombay, and the white cottons and broadcloths are all of English manufacture, imported through India. The coloured cottons are mostly Russian. Silks are from Bokhara. Russian leather is much used for shoes and boots. Many of the cloths in use, such as *barak*, *kurk*, and *aghari*, are woven locally or by the surrounding Turkoman and Aimak tribes. Many varieties of furs, too, are procurable, from common sheep and fox skins, to the finer otter, squirrel, marten, and Astrakan. Sheep-skins and Astrakan are used both for hats and caps, and for lining *poshtins*. Both otter and Astrakan (the best and true Astrakan is the skin of an unborn lamb) are much in vogue as trimmings, while the others are generally used for lining *poshtins*. One of the peculiar institutions of the country of the Uzbek, the Turkoman, and the Aimak, is the *kibitka* (*Russicè*), locally termed *khirgah*. Of these, two have recently been despatched to England by Sir Peter Lumsden—one to the Foreign Office, the other for the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of, I think, 1886, of which he is one of the directors. The latter is a particularly handsome one, circular (as they all are), with a diameter of 16 feet. The framework is made of willow. The walls, which are eight or nine feet in height, consist of a sort of trellis-work, folding up into a small compass for packing, and expanding when the *kibitka* is erected. The roof is supported by a number of curved willow-staves, the upper ends of which fit into slots in a wooden ring some two feet in diameter, forming the centre-piece of the roof, while the lower are attached to the top of the trellis-work wall. The whole is covered from crown to foot with *namad*, a species of thick pliable felt. There is of course *namad* and *namad*. That of the *khirgah* in question is remarkably good. Over the wooden ring in the centre of the roof fits a conical cap of *namad*, so arranged as to allow smoke to escape and yet prevent rain or snow dripping in. The interior is lined with bright-coloured cloth of native manufacture, and the trellis-work girded round by a broad band of Turkoman webbing some 40 feet long. Some of these bits of webbing are of admirable texture, design, and workmanship.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT GULRAN.

KARAWULKHANA, *15th February.*

WE left Bala Murghab this morning. To-morrow we cross the ford at Maruchak, and the next day march straight across from there to Chaman-i-bed on the Khushk, a distance of 41 miles.

GULRAN, *24th February.*

We arrived yesterday at this our second winter-quarters in Badkis, and possibly the scene of the last act of the Boundary Commission drama of 1884-85. Before, however, dealing with the recent events that have contributed to bring about thus prematurely a crisis in the affairs of this Commission, it is desirable to give an account of its movements during the current month. On the 6th instant Colonel Ridgeway, accompanied by Captains Maitland, Yate, and De Laessoe, Kazi Mahomed Aslam, and a native surveyor, started (from Bala Murghab) for Panjdeh. Of the political object of this move little or nothing was at that time known. It was understood that Colonel Ridgeway and Captain de Laessoe would rejoin us at Panjdeh, or at some point on our march to Gulran, of which the route was not then definitely fixed. Captains Maitland and Yate, with the native surveyor, were, on the other hand, to march westward from Panjdeh through Gumbazli towards the Hari Rud, and thence working southward through Badkis, to rejoin us at Gulran, or as the Turkomans pronounce it, Gurlan. Up to the 6th instant the weather had been the reverse of favourable to any

movement; but from that date to the 10th, fortune showed itself to be at times the kind friend of those who must march in foul weather or fair. Unfortunately it cannot be said that Mr Merk and Captain Peacocke, who rejoined us on the 7th or 8th instant at the termination of their somewhat arduous trip to the Oxus and back, of which I have given some account in my last letter, met with similar considerate treatment at the hands of the fickle goddess. The departure of the main body of the Commission had been fixed for the 10th; and in anticipation thereof, at Major Holdich's request Surveyor Imam Sharif had been despatched by a more southerly route than that taken by us, with instructions to meet us at Chaman-i-bed on the Khushk. This he did on the 20th instant, having made the following marches:—

	Miles.
Bala Murghab to Munghan, ...	18
Munghan to Rabat-i-Kashan, ...	16
Rabat-i-Kashan to Chah-i-Nakkash, ...	$17\frac{1}{2}$
Chah-i-Nakkash to Hauz-i-Khan, ...	15
Hauz-i-Khan to Chaman-i-bed, ...	12

Munghan (*alias* Mangan) is the place where the portion of the Commission which marched from Kuhsan under Colonel Ridgeway's command halted the night before it reached Bala Murghab. Rabat-i-Kashan is an old caravanserai in the Kashan valley (along which flows the same stream which we before camped on at Kalah-i-nau, Au-shara, and Tur-i-Shaikh), some 14 miles south of the point where it debouches into the valley of the Murghab near Band-i-Nadiri. At Chah-i-Nakkash there is a single well of drinkable water. Turkomans graze their flocks in its neighbourhood. The supplies laid in for us at Chaman-i-bed from Panjdeh were conveyed thither in three stages by this route, the intermediate halting-places being Rabat-i-Kashan and Chah-i-Nakkash. Hauz-i-Khan is the name of a ruined edifice—be it covered tank, as the name implies, or caravanserai, as some think—on the right bank of the Khushk, half-way between Kalah-i-maur and Chaman-i-bed.

Thus by the above route the Khushk can be reached in four

easy stages from Bala Murghab. The road is good, with easy gradients for the most part, following broad open valleys, The only obstacle is the scanty supply of water at Chah-i-Nakkash. It is, however, difficult to understand why the Commission did not adopt this route, which is shorter and easier than that selected. As for water at Chah-i-Nakkash, it could have been easily carried in *mussuks* and *puckals* from Rabat-i-Kashan, just as we actually did carry it from Ab-i-Kashan for 29 miles to Kalah-i-maur. Permission was furthermore accorded to Captain Peacocke to return through Khushk to the Paropamisus, he being desirous of making a more thorough examination of it, and report on the passes over that range from Badkis into the Hari Rud valley. This permission was withdrawn at the last moment. On the evening of the 9th we all turned in, fully expecting to be up and off at daybreak. As a matter of fact, we were mostly up, but not off; for no sooner had *réveillé* sounded than an order rapidly circulated countermanding the march. Few of us, I think, were loath to take "a little more sleep and a little more slumber." It had been known, or perhaps rather felt, in camp the previous night, that there was, as they say, something in the wind. The Mashhad mail had come in bringing despatches from London, and a sowar had arrived with letters from Colonel Ridgeway. But from which quarter came the motive for excitement but few could say, and those who could kept it to themselves. Since then a fortnight has elapsed, and no efforts at concealment have succeeded in defrauding the glib tongue of Madam Rumour of its rights. A portion of what she revealed I have incorporated in my telegram of yesterday's date. There is, however, little to be gained by doing things by halves. Better to wait till the interests of the State no longer conflict with those of the press, and then deal fully with the momentous occurrences of the past fortnight.[1] Suffice it to say now, that if the 'Saturday

[1] It was not till the 10th May that I found myself at liberty to relate what occurred at Panjdeh between the 9th February and 20th March 1885. Zulfikar and Ak-rabat were occupied by Russian outposts, composed mostly of Turkoman levies, on or about 8th February. Kizil-tapa, about 1½ mile north of

Review' and the 'Times' were both agreed six weeks or more ago that Russia's attitude towards this Boundary Commission was an affront to the British nation, they and the entire press will probably feel justified in using still stronger language when all that has occurred since is made public. It can only be feared that the timidity of a Ministry whose foreign policy has been censured almost as severely by its own organs as by those of the Opposition, and has drawn even from the 'Times' the most unfavourable comments, has encouraged Russia to venture on a forward and aggressive policy. It is of course well known from previous experiences that the Russian Government never hesitates to disavow, and at least to outward appearance disgrace, its agents, should such a course be deemed advisable. But unless sufficient pressure be brought to bear on it, it will not disavow them. Will this Liberal Ministry—if indeed the fall of Khartoum and Gordon's death have not been the signal for its downfall and replacement by one that more adequately represents the feelings and wishes of the people—impose the required amount of pressure? The Commission which has been despatched to Central Asia for the purpose of settling in peaceable communication with the Russian representatives the Russo-Afghan frontier, is first subjected to the insult of being kept waiting indefinitely for the arrival of those representatives, and, in the second place, finds itself opposed, not, as it had reason to anticipate, by the arguments of diplomacy and by claims based on historical, geographical, or ethnological grounds, but by a number of armed parties.

The unexpected postponement of our march on the 10th instant seemed almost providential; for ere the day was over it was raining hard, and so continued till the 13th. It then brightened up a bit, and on the 15th we got under way. Our first day's march was to Karawulkhana, a distance of about 11 miles. Two roads were at our disposal—one running along close under the foot of the hills on the east side, the other down the centre of the valley: we utilised

Pul-i-khishti, was occupied by an outpost of Yulatani Saruks on the 20th February.

both more or less. Considering the recent heavy rains, the ground was surprisingly firm. As we rode along we bade adieu to the reed-beds, whose denizens, pheasant, duck, and snipe, had given us many a good hour's sport. The name Karawulkhana is but a relic of a past existence. The word means an outpost, and it is said that in former years there was a small fort and Afghan outpost here. There are evident traces of the former existence of some edifice or edifices here in the shape of scores of bricks strewn hither and thither, and mounds of *débris*, and a group of pistachios shading the tomb of some holy Mohammedan. The very position itself is, however, internal evidence in support of the previous existence of this outpost. Here the valley, which carries into the Murghab all the drainage from the Chahar Shamba and Kalah Wali districts, and from the *chul* as far as the Band-i-Karabil, and up which runs an easy level road to Kalah Wali, and thence to Chichaktu on the Maimena road, meets the valley of the Murghab. An outpost stationed here would command the road up either valley, and in particular act as a check on the Turkoman raiders who were the terror of caravans and travellers on the road from Maimena to the Murghab. *Apropos* of Turkoman raiders, I will repeat a story told to me the other day by an Afghan officer, which shows the wonderful mobility of the Afghan irregular cavalry (Khawani Sowar). I overtook my informant towards the close of our march into Gulran. He was evidently unfavourably impressed by our complete dependence on finding water and supplies at regular and not too long intervals, and his anecdote was intended to illustrate the superior mobility of his own service. Some years ago, he said, he was one of a body of Khawani Sowar, 700 strong, quartered at Tutuchi, some 20 miles east of Gulran, at which latter place was a small outpost. One evening some sowars of the outpost came across the fresh tracks of a considerable party of mounted men, whom they presumed, or indeed knew, must be Turkoman raiders. Information was at once sent to Tutuchi, and by dawn next day the whole of the 700 horse were *en route* for Gulran. There, picking up the tracks of the Turkomans,

they followed them up to Chaman-i-bed on the Khuskh, where they arrived towards evening. There they overtook and captured several Turkomans, having in the space of from twelve to fourteen hours covered not less than 70 miles. The pace that they adopted was no doubt that of five or six miles an hour, an amble which their horses can keep up for very long distances. And yet these horses, with all their powers of endurance, would be considered neither in size nor weight-carrying powers suited to the requirements of a native cavalry regiment. In a recent issue of 'The Pioneer,' it was remarked that of the horses of the detachment of the 11th Bengal Lancers with this Commission, the *walers* have best stood the test of hard work. One of the officers of the detachment told me, with reference to the subject, that this fact was to be attributed, not to the natural superiority of *walers* over country and stud breds, but to the youth of the former. It appears that all the *walers* of this detachment are about six years old, whereas the horses of other classes are of all ages. No one will deny that, *cæteris paribus*, any animal, be he man, horse, dog, or anything else, will in the prime of life stand more hard work than one verging towards old age. However, to revert to the story of my Afghan. I pointed out to him that to compare the movements of a body of cavalry minus all *impedimenta*, with a mixed force encumbered with an abnormal quantity of baggage and stores, was quite out of place, and that though a horse could cover 70 miles in one day, he could not keep up that pace for more than two or three days at most,—the truth of which statement he was pleased to admit.

On our march from [illegible] to [illegible] (to the fort about 11 miles), we had [illegible] to [illegible] mid-day a moderate snowstorm. [illegible] determined to have our last day with the [illegible] crossed the river and [illegible] followed the right. [illegible] the latter hardly saw a [illegible] when the right bank [illegible] been shot, birds [illegible] conceive any [illegible]

tion, except caprice or accident. One might suppose that the pheasants, remarking that the sportsmen were invariably on the right bank, and that flight to the left invariably brought security, determined to remain on the left bank. But, on the other hand, when shooting in a bit of cover on the right bank, I have seen the pheasants at the first sound of the gun come flying across from the fields on the left bank where they were feeding, and seek refuge in the very cover where I was shooting.

About half a mile east of the ford at Maruchak we passed to the south of the old fort and town. The outer walls of the latter enclose an area in size about half a mile square, and in shape seemingly an irregular quadrilateral. The walls are in a state of disrepair, and the moat is choked with long grass and *débris*. One might not impossibly get some good pheasant-shooting by beating it up. The main gate faces west—*i.e.*, towards the river—and was defended by the usual bastion on either side and a *lunette* in front, while all round the city, along the exterior slope of the earthwork on which the walls are raised, runs a shelter-trench. This latter feature, doubled, is a characteristic of the Herat defences. Within is an absolute wilderness, barely the trace of a building left. From the southern wall juts out the second line of defence, and i the south-west corner of the space it encloses, and abutting o the south wall, stands the citadel, which towers high above t rest. This citadel has been completely and neatly repair by the Afghans, the materials used being the old bricks stre around; and of the same materials they have construc a long line of neat barracks within the inner line of w The defences of the citadel, though a good enough bit of v are not calculated to resist artillery-fire. About half a west of the old fort is the old bridge—three old arche centre one crowned by a tower which aspires to be a h rival of the leaning tower of Pisa. Just below the br the ford, three feet deep, a swift current and none too as sundry camels found out that allowed themselve borne away a little by the force of the stream. M half-a-dozen camels got entangled in a treacherous li just below the ford; and once there, they found th

subjected to a merciless pelting of clods and stones, incentives to extrication. The few mounted Turkomans, however, who lined the ford and guided the camels across it, did more to extricate these camels in distress than all the stones and clods. They proved themselves just as handy at this work as the Jamshidis did at Bala Murghab. As ill-luck would have it, one of the camels fated to come to grief was laden with a portmanteau holding all my best and most gorgeous apparel, my peacock's feathers. They came out of the Murghab sadly draggled, and have not even yet quite recovered themselves. But indeed I have every reason to be thankful that I did not lose them altogether. I had been engaged for several hours in superintending the safe transit of the baggage; and at last, seeing that nearly all had passed over and the rear-guard had arrived, I rode across myself and went on to camp. Among the camels left behind were those carrying my own kit. One of them was carried into the deep water below the ford, and only the exertions of a Turkoman lad saved its load. It was a very chilly day, I can assure you; and to get wet through to save a stranger's kit was no small sacrifice. When the circumstances of the accident were related to me afterwards, I recollected having seen a wretched wet, shivering boy sitting near my tent trying to light a fire. Although not then aware of the deep obligation I was under to him—for, strange to say, he did not even allude to what he had done, far less ask for reward—I, from mere commiseration for any poor beggar in such a plight, gave him some food and lent him an old *poshtin* and blanket. It was not till a week later that I again came across him on the line of march, and was enabled to present him with a more substantial token of recognition. I must, however, admit that [illegible] of his race appear to be exceedingly rare. Those with whom I have had pecuniary transactions [illegible] ordinate greed for filthy lucre. [illegible] among them and under their [illegible] parison. The fact is, these [illegible] is, for peasantry. Im[illegible] flocks, and manuf[illegible]

-erly in a commodity akin to that which the old French -traders used to term *bois d'ébène*, not to mention the r proceeds of their *chapaos*. Very many of their articles domestic use being of home manufacture, the houses or -*itkas* of even the poorer classes are garnished with carpets d ornaments that elsewhere would be regarded as accessible the well-to-do classes only. The value and weight of a com- -ete set of jewellery, such as a Turkoman woman bedecks her- -elf with, of solid silver, or silver inlaid with cornelian and overlaid with gold, is very considerable. A young native draughtsman from the Jaipur School of Art, in Dr Owen's employ, has made a series of drawings of these ornaments, which, if published, would be an interesting contribution to the history of the goldsmith's art. Not that Turkoman jewellery can boast of the exquisite workmanship that char- acterises the Indian: far from it. But it is, to the best of my knowledge, unique of its kind. They use no stone but cornelian, and more rarely the turquoise, and these too of inferior quality. Their passion for cornelian is truly un- accountable. What beauty can they see in its dull red colouring? However, every man to his taste. Any man with a good stock of cornelian on hand could not do better than bring it to the Turkoman market, now that they have been taught to respect the life and property of aliens. It is but a few years ago that the Tekkes and Saruks used to bring to the Mashhad market caravans laden with the products of their agricultural and manufacturing labour. Having disposed of these, they amused themselves on the return journey by "lifting," to use the technical Border term, anything that came handy—man, woman, child, beast, or other portable property. So intolerable did their depredations become, that a governor of Khorasan forbade the admission of Turkoman caravans into Persian territory; but the Persians found they could not get on without them, so the restrictions agains[t] them were relaxed.

We encamped on the night of the 16th on the left bank the Murghab. Near our camp was a good-sized Saruk villag[e] the dwellings being, not *kibitkas*, but hovels with circu-

mud-walls and thatched roofs. I cannot say that the interior of them, as far as I could see, exhibited signs of comfort, far less of affluence. Presumably the wealth is all accumulated at Panjdeh. The area of land under present cultivation did not appear to be extensive, although the signs of a former period of great agricultural activity were on all sides apparent. The flat bread-cakes baked by the Turkoman women in underground ovens are, when fresh and still hot, very palatable food. These ovens are nothing but holes 2 or 2½ feet deep dug in the soil, and coated with clay mixed or smeared over with a solution of salt. A fire is then lighted in the hole and the lining baked hard, and it is then fit for use. In the process of baking—which is done by heating the oven with a strong fire to the required degree of heat, and that done, removing the fuel and inserting the loaves—the saline properties contained in the lining impart a flavour to the bread.

Leaving our camp at Maruchak on the morning of the 17th, we made straight for the hills bounding the valley on the west, and after meandering among them for six or seven miles, emerged into the Kashan valley, on the far or west side of which we encamped near a copious stream, the muddy colour of which suggested its origin from surface-drainage. In fact in December last, before the late snows and rains, its channel was perfectly dry. And yet at Rabat-i-Kashan, some 11 miles to the south, this same channel contains, it is said, running water all the year round. Doubtless, as is so often the case, the water disappears underground. We encamped some three or four miles south of Band-i-Nadiri on the Murghab. It is a fine fertile valley that of Kashan, fully two miles broad, and covered at this season with a rich young coat of fine grass admirably adapted for a cricket-ground; and barring the innumerable rat-holes, a finer site for a polo-ground could nowhere be found. They are most dangerous those rat-holes, in fact a perfect curse. Every few yards in went the horse's feet over the fetlocks. To trot or canter over such ground not only involved risk to life and limb of the rider, but also the probability of seriously straining the horse, the latter indeed even at a walk. One serious accident

tury, the Hazaras and Jamshidis, or a portion at least of those tribes, successively settled here.

The more marked and prominent features of the country between the Murghab and Khushk contrast strikingly with the gently undulating downs (which bear a close resemblance to the South Downs of Sussex) west of the latter river. The soil of the first-named tract is lighter and more sandy than that of the Murghab valley, a quality that has no doubt endeared it to the heart of the marmot. It may be noticed that here none but white crocuses grow, whereas only those of saffron hues patronise the banks of the Murghab. The valley of the Khushk, from the point where we entered it to Chaman-i-bed (24 miles), has an average breadth of little more than one-third of a mile, except opposite Kalah-i-maur, where the downs recede westward and form a broad deep bay. The water of the river is very salt at and below Kalah-i-maur, but becomes less so higher up. In the dry season the stream entirely disappears for a space below Chaman-i-bed.

About mid-day on the 19th February it began to rain heavily. As night came on rain became snow, and frost setting in, the tents were frozen stiff ere morn. Many retired to rest with the confident hope of a Europe morning. At 7 A.M. on the 20th the inexorable *réveillé* sounded, and amid a heavy snowstorm our luckless servants unpitched our tents, stamped the frozen masses into portable shapes, and finally succeeded in securing them on the backs of our much-enduring beasts of burden. It was 10.30 ere all was off and the rear-guard under way for Chaman-i-bed, distant 20½ miles. And what a road! Fetlock-deep, and more than fetlock-deep, in snow and slush and mud, crossing the river continuously, and, what is most fatal to camels, slippery. Seven or eight miles from camp a deep ditch created a block. There, as usual the 20th Panjab Infantry came to the front, and first levelled the banks, and by throwing in brushwood, furnished a firm foot-hold for the camels. Then, as luck would have it, [illegible] camel laden with a dozen or so of stout [illegible] the Commissariat bakery, if I mistake not. [illegible] their proper sphere, they were very [illegible]

date themselves to the exigencies of the moment, and speedily laid across that ditch as the supports of an *impromptu* bridge; added some brushwood and earth, and all was done and the camels filing over—no, not gaily, but wearily and ploddingly. We are not all Mark Tapleys. How many camels measured their length in the treacherous mud of that ditch? Not a few—among others, one laden with a big tent hard-frozen, abnormally weighty. Five of us set to work to tug the tent out of the water. In vain we pulled; it moved not. The camel-driver said mournfully but admiringly, "What a camel is this that could carry such a load even so far!" We rewarded the enduring beast by dividing its load. All day we toiled in the face of driving snow and sleet, and it was not till long after dark that most of us got our tents pitched, and after a scratch meal, retired to rest. Rations could not be issued, and so not a few of the servants and followers went to bed supperless, and passed the night in the open air, crouched round a cheerless fire of saturated wood, or huddled up in their drenched clothes and bedding. So much misery was too much for one poor fellow, a baker. He was buried before we marched next day for Islim. For we had to march. Affairs of State admit of no delay, nor can the lives of its servants be weighed in the balance against them.

Captain Peacocke, riding out on the 22d to inspect the road to Gulran, suddenly found himself within 50 yards of a small herd of wild asses, the first seen by any of us. So far from taking to their heels with the speed of wind, they are said to have trotted off with (to a man without a rifle) exasperating coolness.

Mr Simpson, the special artist of the 'Illustrated London News,' left the Boundary Commission at Gulran on the 25th February, to return through Persia to Europe. The fact is, that such distinctive features worthy of record by the pencil of the artist as this country possesses are soon exhausted. And now that nearly four months have elapsed since Sir Peter Lumsden reached Sarakhs, and the advent of the Russian Commission seems more than ever a vague uncertainty, the artist's occupation is gone. I hear that Colonel Alikhan-

off, when Mr Simpson visited him at Old Sarakhs about the 9th November last, *courteously expressed a hope that he would* visit him later on at Merv. Circumstances have prevented Mr Simpson from taking advantage of this offer; but *en revanche*, Colonel Alikhanoff has done us the honour of paying one or more visits to our Afghan *protégés* near Panjdeh without any formal invitation. Mr Simpson took the opportunity of accompanying the mules going to Mashhad for treasure. Captain Griesbach also went with him; but leaving him at Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, purposes to go south across the Bakharz and Karat Kuh ranges to Khaf, and after that return northward and examine the Jam range.

At Islim on the 21st we were met by Colonel Stewart, Assistant Commissioner. At the time of Sir Peter Lumsden's departure from London he was, owing to ill health, unable to accompany him. Leaving England in November, he came out *viâ* Tiflis, Teheran, and Mashhad to Kuhsan. Thence he went to Shikiwan, some 30 miles west of Herat on the Hari Rud, and after interviewing the Governor of Herat there, crossed the Paropamisus and joined us.

It has been found by experience that even natives themselves pronounce the names of places with slight variations, and when it comes to foreign travellers hardly any two of them will agree. If we consider that Badkis and its environs are tenanted by Afghans, Persians, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Turkomans, is it surprising that we should hear names variously pronounced? Take, for instance, the name of our present camp, Gulran, as the Afghans, Persians, and the Chahar Aimaks pronounce it. Look for it on the latest map, and you at once recognise it in Gurlin. You doubtless tacitly credit the authority for that spelling, with ignorance of Persian or an uncommon bad ear. But go to a Turkoman, and you will find that he invariably says, if not Gurlin, Gurlan. In the southern half of Badkis the names are all, or almost all, of Persian origin, as also along the banks of the Hari Rud as far as Sarakhs, and of the Khushk and Murghab as far as Pul-i-khishti. North of the points mentioned on the rivers, and of a line drawn across Badkis from the Zul-

fikar Pass through Ak-rabat to the Khushk, they are almost all Turki. Between the Murghab and the Oxus Turki names prevail.[1]

11th March.

We have had a good deal of snow and rain during the past ten days, intermitting with spells of sunshine; and as a consequence, the broad plain of Gulran is one vast expanse of sprouting grass, and will ere long be a magnificent meadow. What can those 300 families of Firuzkuhis be doing who as long ago as December last were said to be on their way to settle here? Why does all this fertile soil lie untilled, and where are the flocks and herds to crop this rich pasture? Our horses and our transport have the monopoly of it. What a contrast to the past! Half a mile east of our camp stand the ruins of what must once have been a strong fort, the stronghold of successive settlements whose habitations and handiwork may be traced to some distance on all sides. It is probable that this has been the abode and refuge of man from a very remote period. Report, however, says that it was last repaired and occupied by Bunyad Khan Hazara at the commencement of this century. There is also a fort named Kalah-i-Bunyad Khan, four miles north-east of Toman Aka. Hazaras, Jamshidis, and Taimuris have successively squatted here, and successively withdrawn before the terror of Turkoman raids. The Taimuris are now located around Khaf, and while the greater part of the Jamshidis and Hazaras have for many years been permanently settled around Khushk and Kalah-i-nau, some few families of either tribe are still to be found near Muhsinabad and Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam in Persia. The most extensive traces of prior occupation of this valley are to be seen four miles farther south. In the centre of the Gulran plain rises a long low ridge running north and south. On its southern extremity may be now seen the distinct outlines of a small fort (there was once a well inside it; it is now filled up and almost obliterated) and other structures; while for a mile to the east and south-east may be seen not only the

[1] Consult Vambéry in 'Proceedings of Geographical Society' for September 1885 on this subject.

most distinct indications of the existence of a large town containing many good-sized edifices, but also the fainter traces of the walls and irrigation-channels of the outlying gardens. The most marked feature is the strongly fortified citadel, situated about the centre of the town. The hand of time and the working of the elements have cloaked this site in a garb of soil and vegetation similar to that of the surrounding plain. But beneath this cloak the outlines of its salient features—the citadel, the mosque, the caravanserai—are recognisable. The surface reveals nothing more, unless it be an occasional brick and scraps of pottery. Who built and populated, and who laid it waste? To the first half of this question we may with some probability reply, the ancient Persians, and after them the proselytising soldiers of the early Caliphates; and to the second, the devastating hordes of Jhengiz Khan and his descendants. At the eastern extremity of the town are the ruins of the caravanserai, close to which still passes, as it did in former times, the caravan-route from Herat to Pul-i-Khatun. Underlying the vegetation that has now overgrown this little-used track, may be detected the indications of a once much-frequented trade-route. That the caravanserai should appear youthful by the side of the other effaced remains is in no way surprising. For in the interest of commerce the final decay of this essential convenience of Asiatic trade and travel must have been staved off by periodical repairs, long after *Gulrana antiqua* had become the home of the fox and the coney. The bridge at Pul-i-Khatun was built by a granddaughter of Taimur Lang some 450 years ago. This *serai* was undoubtedly habitable then, if not later. The ruined *serais* which we now see on the road from Herat to Mashhad date, I believe, from the reign of Shah Abbas. They are but crumbling ruins now, whereas the one here has not one brick left standing on another. Near it is a *ziarat* and an extensive cemetery, which has evidently, even in recent years, bee as a resting-place for the dead. From here the . south over the Au-safid and Chashma-i-sabz P.. Paropamisus into the valley of the Hari Rud.

It would appear from reports that have of late been

that the attitude of the Persian officials towards the British Commission is by no means so friendly as it was last October or November. Whether the Shah is a party to this covert hostility or not is unknown; not unnaturally it is attributed to Russian influence. If report be true, the present Governor of Khorasan, entitled Asaf-ud-daulah, makes no secret of his anti-British proclivities.[1] Another report, however, says that he is likely to be ere long recalled to Teheran and removed from his government, but whether for injustice or extortion, incapacity or too palpable Russophilism, is unknown. Physically the Persians are by no means contemptible; and pusillanimous as they have of late appeared in war with us and with the Afghans and Turkomans, they would, if fed, clothed, paid, and drilled, and officered by men in whose honour and courage they could trust, show that they are not wanting in sterling qualities. If on the demise of the ruling monarch the Zill-us-Sultan should be powerful enough to win the throne from the Wali-ahd—as we should sincerely hope he may—then we might look for the inauguration of an abler and perhaps juster rule, and also for the revival of the predominance of British over Russian influence. Both the Zill-us-Sultan and the Naib-us-Sultanah, the Shah's eldest and third sons, are abler men than the heir-apparent, who is too much in the hands of the Mullas to be a likely advocate of enlightened and advanced ideas. The former is in fact, like most educated Persians, a decided freethinker, although he maintains an outward show of respect for the religion of his forefathers. Unfortunately the Shah has been so little favourably impressed by his own visit to Europe, that he declines to allow any of his sons following his example. In

[1] The period during which Abdul-Wahhab Khan, Asaf-ud-daulah, held the governor-generalship of Khorasan, was marked by a succession of revolts against his authority. His very appointment is said to have evoked remonstrances; and certainly within a few months of his appointment, in the latter part of 1884, the inhabitants of Mashhad petitioned the Shah to remove him. For an account of the outbreak in Mashhad in July 1885, see letters dated from that city on the 8th and 17th July, republished in this volume. Early in 1886 a fresh disturbance broke out again, caused by the extortionate measures of the Asaf-ud-daulah. Early in March he was replaced by Mahmud Khan Nasr-ul-mulk, then Minister for Foreign Affairs.

1881, when I was in [illegible] an interview with the [illegible] a very strong desire to visit Europe. [illegible] younger years [illegible] travel and residence in Europe, [illegible] experience [illegible] must be [illegible] self to new impressions. [illegible] ablest governor in Persia [illegible] potic [illegible] execution [illegible] that any change [illegible] can take place in the [illegible] per-haps, ere [illegible] delivery of [illegible] future, Persia may [illegible] and be merged in the [illegible] presuming that [illegible] he do with all his [illegible] gain? It lies, they say, buried in [illegible] or palaces. If he were a wise man and had [illegible] of foresight or prophecy, he would [illegible] long ago. Better [illegible] come, than [illegible] can easily [illegible] but never a reality [illegible] questionable if he [illegible] own country, and his relations with [illegible] never been [illegible] extent of their [illegible] Shah's character [illegible] down and [illegible] This village [illegible] they [illegible] could not pay. [illegible] I having [illegible] satisfaction that [illegible] Turkman [illegible]

cows, and in future will only demand forty." An ill-fated Persian shepherd who had been carried off with his flock by Turkomans, was set free after five years' captivity. On his return to his native place he was called upon by the local tax-gatherer to pay up the tax on his flock for the past five years. One of the Shah's courtiers, more prescient and enlightened than his Majesty, deposited all his savings in the Bank of England. The Shah becoming cognisant of it, burned with desire to finger this wealth. As a preliminary step he was graciously pleased to give him one of his daughters in marriage. Having thus, as he considered, bound him to himself and placed him under a deep obligation, he began to throw out strongish hints about the snug little nest-egg in the Bank of England. The honoured courtier, seeing how the land lay, consulted his royal bride. That lady, with true conjugal affection, said, "Fly from this unjust realm, and I will fly with thee." So they fled, and lived, I trust, happy ever afterwards. The Shah confiscated all they left; but to that they must have made up their minds before they started.

I heard a story the other day which, if quite correct on matters of fact, illustrates in a remarkable way how accident at times comes to the aid of charlatanism. My informant is a most reliable authority—could not be more so—though not an eyewitness of the events he relates. In addition to undoubted veracity, he possesses at least one of the qualifications which Archdeacon Paley deemed essential to trustworthy testimony—viz., absolute freedom from all bias. As the tale I am about to repeat contains some features that verge not only on the miraculous, but also on the improbable, and as I am not one who believes in miraculous intervention on behalf of any of the numerous army of latter-day saints, I premise the above remarks. The event I am about to relate occurred in 1842, and it was some years before that that a native of Shiraz saw reason to believe that the Deity had endowed him with gifts and powers above his fellow-men, and in particular ordained him to be one of those select few destined to reveal the divine will on earth. This person, whatever name his parents or guardians gave him, decided,

when he felt the divine *afflatus* stirring within him, to abandon it for the more suggestive cognomen of El-bab, which is, in the Arab tongue, "The Door." El-bab founded the sect of Babis, who at a later date (1849-50) suffered much persecution, and of whom there are still large numbers in Persia. The Mohammedans, as at least some people know, consider Mohammed to be the last of a series of prophets ordained by the Deity to reveal and preach the divine faith on earth. Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Christ were his forerunners, but none were to come after him. El-bab arose and taught otherwise. Poor fellow! he ran his allotted course very quickly. He was finally made a prisoner at Zinjan, between Kazvin and Tabriz, and sentenced to be shot. Of his followers, two were captured with him. They were told to spit in his face and renounce him, or die. One chose the former, the other the latter alternative. El-bab and his faithful disciple were led out to execution. A company of Persian infantry fell in, and at a given word fired. When the smoke cleared, the disciple lay dead, and El-bab was nowhere to be seen. The consternation of the bigoted soldiery was indescribable. Firmly convinced that no human intervention could have saved him, they could only see in this a signal manifestation of the divine power. For a time they were incapable of any rational action. The report of a miracle spread like wildfire, and crowds collected. Some of the spectators, more incredulous than the majority, suggested that at least a search should be made for him. They searched, but found him not, and returned to the guard-room whence he had been led out to die but an hour or two before. There, cowering in a dark corner, was found El-bab. The story says that the bullets of the volley left him unscathed, one only cutting the cord that bound him. Freed, he fled to the nearest refuge, the guard-room. Re-found, he was again led out to be shot. The soldiers, still under the spell of superstition, absolutely refused to level their guns at him. A Persian officer hacked him to death with his sword.[1]

[1] See Watson's History of Persia, pp. 385-392.

But now let us pass from the scene of a horrible martyrdom to lighter themes. A little anecdote from the Zulfikar Pass has just come in, which might dispel grim thoughts. And yet, now I think of it, this tale ends in an attempted suicide. But to my story. You know there is a Russian post at the Zulfikar Pass. It was placed there by a Russian officer about the 8th February, and a few days later a body of Afghans appeared and encamped in the vicinity of the Russians. I am a little afraid of hazarding an estimate of the strength of each party, because, according to the statements of credible persons, the Russian post may consist of anything from 10 to 60, and the Afghan from 100 to 200. Suffice it to know that the Afghans are much the stronger. When they arrived they found the Russians ensconced in a strong defensible position in the pass. After some days a bright idea struck the Afghan commander, and he went off and paid a visit of courtesy to the Russian officer. He pointed out that he had not come there to attack him—in fact he had special orders to abstain from hostilities—and he thought, therefore, that the two parties might as well be on as friendly terms as circumstances would permit. It would be a convenience to both of them to camp near the river-bank and benefit by the proximity of good water. The Russian officer, *mirabile dictu*, consented; and so both parties transferred their camps to the banks of the Hari Rud. When daylight broke on the scene next morning, it was found that the Afghans had occupied the very position just vacated by the Russians.[1] To remonstrate was futile, to fight was in vain, for the Afghans were at least three to one; so the Russian officer in the bitterness of his heart tried to find consolation and oblivion in a rope adjusted to the ridge-pole of his tent. His men, however, insisted on preserving his life. You may feel surprised that a man should think life not worth living because he had been caught in the trap of a wily Afghan; but the fact is, the poor fellow knew he had to

[1] This appears to be the Afghan version. Subsequently the Russians charged the Afghans with having ousted the Russian picket by force. Kettle calling the pot black!



Zulficar Khan.

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choose between death and almost certain professional disgrace or degradation. The Russian military service is a hard and stern task-master. Not long ago, when General Lumsden was at Sarakhs, an Afghan escort, sent to conduct him to Kuhsan, passed the Russian post at Pul-i-Khatun. Whether the Russian officer in command there was unaware that the Afghans had passed his post, or whether he did not feel himself authorised to forbid their passage, I am unable to say. All I know is, that General Komaroff at once removed him from his post.

Here we are encamped in southern Badkis, a country that for a century past has been lying almost waste owing to the terror of the very name of Turkoman. But the days of the *alaman* are over. Most of the Turkoman tribes are now Russian subjects, and those who are not are either located along the northern and north-eastern frontier of Persia, or the north-western frontier of Afghanistan. The tribes that most concern us now are the Tekke, Saruk, Salor, and Ersari. Let us say a word or two of each in turn.

The Tekke Turkomans at the beginning of this century were settled in the Balkan near Krasnovodsk, on the east shore of the Caspian. About 140 years ago they appeared in the Daman-i-koh or Akhal country; and when Nadir Shah died, in 1747, they took advantage of the troubled state of Persia, and drove the inhabitants out of the villages on the northern border and occupied Akhal. Later on a portion of them settled near Karaband, on the lower Tejend, where the Russians now have a military post. After the taking of Old Sarakhs in 1834 by Abbas Mirza (when he carried the Salors captive to Mashhad and sold them), a large body of Tekkes came from Akhal, built the first fort called Kalah-i-Kaushid Khan, a few miles north of Old Sarakhs, and settled around it. Kaushid Khan was the name of one of their most influential headmen. There they remained till 1855, when they got into serious hot-water with the Persian Government, and fearing the Shah's resentment and revenge, went off to Merv, drove the Saruks thence after several years' desultory fighting, in which the Akhal Tekkes aided them, to Yulatan

and Panjdeh, and constructed Kalah-i-Kaushid Khan No. II. The Tekkes have henceforth been divided into two sections, the Akhal and the Merv. The Saruks, after a prolonged struggle, characterised by a want of united action, finally abandoned Merv. The fact is, that all the wealthy Saruks, and in particular the Sukhti section, perceiving the hopelessness of resistance, and fearing the loss of all their flocks and other property, abandoned Merv at an early stage of the conflict. The other sections, however, or the greater part of them—viz., Bairaj, Harzegi, Aleshah, and Khorasanli—kept up a desultory fight for three or four years, and then gradually withdrew to Panjdeh and Charjui. Those who elected to settle in the latter place did not stay there long, but migrated to Panjdeh, some by the direct route across the *chul via* Jilangir and Karabil (Mr Merk and Captain Peacocke followed this route for several stages on their way from Maruchak to Andkhui), and others by the more circuitous route of Maimena and Kalah Wali. It appears that at that time, as perhaps also now, Charjui was thickly populated by Ersari and Kara Turkomans—so much so, that land, which as a rule, among Turkomans, can be had for the taking, had to be purchased. Hence this re-migration to Panjdeh where land was more plentiful. At first the Sukhtis, having migrated *en masse*, had it all their own way; but as family after family of the other sections arrived and swelled their numbers, the former found themselves constrained to accord them equal privileges with themselves as landholders. The land was then apportioned thus:—

To the Sukhtis, the left bank of the Murghab from Old Panjdeh to Sari Yazi—it will thus be seen that from the first the valley of the Murghab as far as Sari Yazi has belonged to the Saruks of Panjdeh; to the Harzegis, the left bank of the river south of Panjdeh; to the Bairaj and Aleshah, the right bank of the river north and south of Panjdeh; to the Khorasanli, the land in the vicinity of Panjdeh.

At the time when this subdivision of the land was made, some 300 families of Ersaris were settled on the left bank

between Band-i-Nadiri and Maruchak. Encroached on by the Harzegis, they withdrew to Daulatabad near Andkhui. The settlements of the Harzegi now extend to Karawul-khana and Kalah Wali.

In *1857* the Persians made their first attack on the Tekkes of Merv. Though productive of no decisive results, it did not terminate in a disaster. The second attack was made in 1860, under the command of the Governor of Khorasan, Hashmat-ud-daulah, who, however, left everything to his Wazir, Kawam-ud-daulah. *The Persian army left Mashhad in May—than* which no more unfavourable time of the year could have been selected—crossed the Tejend a month later in June, and reached the Murghab in the vicinity of Merv in July. Arrived there they commenced operations against the Tekkes, *but with such a marked want of skill and energy that no* decisive success was obtained. They also detached a large force against the Salors at Yulatan, and obliged them to retreat up the Murghab. The Saruks, animated by enmity against the Tekkes, sent a small contingent to aid the Persians, *and also furnished them with supplies of food, grain, and* fodder. At last the Tekkes, emboldened by the inactivity and incapacity of the Persian generals, mustered in strength, and assuming the offensive, attacked the invading force and routed it with terrible slaughter. Indeed the Persians, though vastly superior in numbers, would seem to have offered only the feeblest resistance. Defeated by the Tekkes, they fell back to Yulatan. Up to that time the Saruks had been the allies of the Persians. But at Yulatan, in a quarrel a Persian killed a Saruk, and was in turn killed by his victim's brother. A fight ensued between the Saruk contingent and the Persians. As soon as the Governor of Khorasan heard of *this, he ordered his horse, and leaving his army to take care* of itself, made tracks for Persia. His departure was the signal for a general flight, and the flight was a signal for a general attack and pursuit by Tekkes, Saruks, and Salors. Camp, stores, guns (some thirty or more—they now ornament Kalah-i-Kaushid Khan), everything was abandoned and plundered. It was simply *sauve qui peut.* The Persians are

said to have fled up the Murghab and Khushk to Kalah-i-maur, and thence across Badkis into Persia. Indeed, what other road had they? For them to have taken to the waterless *chul* between Yulatan and Sarakhs was certain death. Never was an army caught in such a trap; the Tekkes in front, and the Saruks and Salors in rear, and flight to right and left impossible: no chance but to rush into the jaws of death and slavery. Of 40,000 men who left Mashhad in May, only 8000 returned to Persia in October. It happened (so at least I have heard) that at this time Sir Lewis Pelly was in or near Herat. He had been first Secretary of Legation at Teheran, until in 1860 that Legation was transferred from the Indian to the Home Foreign Office. Sir Henry Rawlinson, who was then Minister, resigned, and all the Secretaries but one returned to duty in India. Sir Lewis Pelly resolved to travel *viâ* Herat and Kandahar. Hence his presence near the former city in October 1860. Directly he heard the news of the Persian disaster, he started for the scene of action. First he met Hashmat-ud-daulah, and offered to take command of a rear-guard and cover the retreat, if the Governor would place some reliable troops at his disposal. He was referred to Kawam-ud-daulah. Him Pelly found—so the story goes—in the act of drawing on his boots, preparatory to continuing his flight towards his native land. He received Pelly's proposal with the profoundest indifference, and informed him that now a few lives lost more or less was of no moment. His game now was to shield himself from the Shah's sovereign rage and displeasure; and with that object in view, his only care was to reach Mashhad without delay, and ensure that the first version of the affair that reached the Shah should be his. A worthy despatch of a worthy minister! It is said that not only the Turkoman men, but also their womankind, joined in the congenial task of plunder and pursuit. Among those captured was a French photographer who had accompanied the Persian force. Such was the glut of slaves in the markets of Merv and Panjdeh after this windfall, that the Frenchman, who was perhaps neither young nor good-looking, nor stalwart nor strong, was put up for sale at the price of nine

tomans, or £3, 12s. However, as soon as the Turkomans found that a fuss was being made about his ransom, they raised the price to 8000 Bokhara *tilas*, or Rs. 60,000, and got it. The province of Khorasan was specially taxed to raise this sum; and what is more edifying still, I hear that this tax has been raised annually ever since. How little are we Englishmen, with our Mansion House and other Relief Funds, aware of the charitable institutions of our neighbours! Here we find the people of Khorasan annually contributing Rs. 60,000 for the noble purpose of ransoming an ill-starred being who has fallen into the hands of the Turkomans. Furthermore, with a display of confidence in their monarch that is really touching, they have begged him to graciously consent to receive and dispose of these funds to the best advantage of the State. There seems to be no doubt about his receiving them, though he does not acknowledge them in the 'Teheran Gazette.' Nor has he ever been known to publish any details of the expenditure. The Frenchman having been set at liberty, returned to his native country and published his experiences in a French magazine. In that article he not unnaturally omitted to mention that he had been taken captive by a Tekke woman. We must therefore conclude that some one let the cat out of the bag for him, seeing that a report to that effect is current.

After the flight of the Persian army the Salors did not return to Yulatan, but settled near Maruchak for a time, and then moved towards Maimena. The Saruks, taking advantage of the evacuation of Yulatan by the Salors, occupied it. It is at any rate known that not long after their settlement at Panjdeh some 4000 families migrated to Yulatan. The reason the Saruks now give for this move is, that the area of cultivable land between Sari Yazi and Maruchak by no means sufficed for the requirements of the whole tribe. It is too sandy for rain-crops, and they are consequently dependent solely on irrigated land. Even in the valleys of the Khushk and Kalah-i-nau waters and at Kalah Wali, a heavy rainfall flooding the streams is requisite to ensure good crops. The grain produced at Panjdeh is not sufficient for their local

wants, and they therefore import largely from Maimena. I would remark that this estimate of the productiveness of the *daimi* or rain-lands in no way agrees with what I was told everywhere on our march through Khushk and Kalah-i-nau to Bala Murghab. The fact is, that at the present time land is of so little value in Badkis and the adjacent valleys, that the Turkomans consider it not worth their while to cultivate precarious rain-crops. That the soil of Badkis is singularly porous and mixed with sand, there is no doubt. Heavy as the rain and snow fall is here, nowhere on these rolling downs can be detected the vestige of a water-course. The rain falls and soaks straight into the ground. The snow lies and does ditto. None flows away *above* the surface of the soil. How deep below the surface lies the impervious stratum in which this water collects, is a question for Captain Griesbach to decide. Judging by the depths of the old wells in this country, it varies greatly. For instance, on the road from Ak-tapa to Sarakhs, the wells at Gumbazli Saruk are about 100 feet deep, and at Kirish 140. At a place called Alli-bir, some 20 miles south of Kaiun-Kuyusi, the wells are said to be 51 *kuluch* or fathoms (306 feet) in depth. Alli-bir in Turkish means 51. *Kuluch* is the length of the arms outstretched from finger-tip to finger-tip. Again, at Adam Yulan and Kungruali, on the western side of Badkis, the water-bearing stratum is very much nearer the surface, the wells being only about 40 feet deep. Furthermore, in the spring at any rate, water could be obtained in many of the hollows by digging down a few feet. In fact, during the winter and spring the sources of water-supply for travellers in this *chul* are very varied. Irrespective of the occasional wells and springs, there is the snow, which lies on the northern slopes of the higher spurs, and in sheltered hollows long after it has disappeared from the more exposed parts. Here and there the rain-water collects in hollows where the ground chances to be not of the porous nature above described. In many of the valleys, *nullahs* that are dry in the latter half of the year are filled after rain by underground drainage from the neighbouring downs. I remarked that the beds of these *nullahs* were often composed of fine gravel, and

that after the flood-water ran off, much remained collected in pools. Unfortunately it was often too salt to be drinkable, horses and dogs even refusing to touch it. There is yet one other provision of nature here for the relief of thirst, and that is an umbelliferous plant called in Turkish *Ejik-okharasi*, and in Persian *Tama*. In its general appearance it closely resembles asafœtida, with this difference, that from each node on the stem grows a large circular cup-shaped leaf in one solid piece. When rain falls it collects in this cup, and as each cup shelters the other from the sun's rays, some time elapses before the water evaporates. Nor is this the only use of this plant, which is now springing up in countless myriads all over the *chul*. The camels browse on the young leaves, and the tender shoots are cooked and eaten as a vegetable by the natives of the country. The roots are in the autumn dug up and stored as winter-fodder for beasts. Of another umbelliferous plant that grows here in abundance, both the root and stalk are used for human food. The thick coating of strong fibres that protects the roots would make rope and matting. It is very like cocoa-nut fibre. An edible bulbous plant also grows here. But to return to the Saruks. Those of Yulatan devote themselves almost exclusively to agriculture, the area of cultivable land being ample for all, and the facilities for irrigation excellent. Water is drawn off for Yulatan at Band-i-Kazakli, some 60 miles north of Panjdeh. This *bund* is constructed of fascines of tamarisk-boughs bound together by twisted reed-switches. These are first staked down in the bed of the river, and then earth is piled between and against them. It is built out from either bank, and the open interval in the centre of the stream is bridged over. This is said to be the only place between Panjdeh and Yulatan where the river can be crossed, there being no fords.

11th March.

The Saruks of Panjdeh are rather a pastoral than an agricultural people. They have always paid taxes to the Herat Government, either through the Hazara or Jamshidi chief, or to a resident Afghan Naib. They also furnished an outpost at Aimakjar, 25 miles north of Ak-tapa. They

large flocks, and graze them on the *chul* both east and west of the Murghab. A flock usually consists of from 1200 to 1500 sheep, and is tended by two men, the shepherd (*chupan*) and his assistant. The former is paid about 25 Bokhara *tilas* (Rs. 135) per annum, and the latter (styled *shalak*) from six to eight *tilas*. Besides this they get clothes and food, and the *chupan* has a right to all the maimed and wounded sheep, which in a year amount to a very large number; for not only do the wolves carry them off for food, but also deliberately attack and wantonly maim large numbers. Consequently every flock is provided with at least three or four powerful sheep-dogs; but even they can only partially avert the attacks of the wolves, which, though rarely seen by us, are evidently very numerous, their tracks being found all over the country. They very often get caught in the traps set for foxes (in whose skins the Saruks do a great trade, trapping them in the autumn and early winter, and sending the skins to Bokhara), and are then followed up and shot, or beaten to death with sticks. In winter the sheep require little or no water (snow is generally available), and are then grazed around the Nimaksar, of which more anon. The lambing season is in March, and when that is over, the flocks are taken northward along the Murghab to Aimakjar and Sari Yazi. In the hot weather they never graze very far from the river or a set of wells, as they must be watered every second or third day. The watering-places on the Murghab are termed *guzar*, a word usually meaning ford; but, as I have said above, there are believed to be no fords north of Panjdeh. The Saruks are said to export annually at least 25,000 sheep to Bokhara alone. They also export them *viâ* Sarakhs to Mashhad, and probably to Herat. Although the sheep in winter do not require to be watered, the wells at Kaiun-Kuyusi and Ak-rabat are absolutely indispensable for the shepherds. When the Tekkes were at Sarakhs, at which time the Saruks were at Merv, and only a small settlement of Ersaris at Panjdeh, they monopolised most of the grazing country in northern Badkis. But when the changes which I have recounted above took place in 1855, this pas-

ture-land passed into the hands of the Saruks. Exposed as this tract was to the Tekke raids—indeed one of their most frequented raiding-routes into Persia, and the salt-road from Merv to the western salt-lake, both pass through it—the Saruks have been somewhat chary of venturing to Gumbazli, Sarakhs, Kirish, and Kaiun-Kuyusi with their flocks. However, if they have grazed on it but little, the Tekkes of Merv and the Salors of Sarakhs have never attempted to graze on it at all, and have not the slightest claim to it. Only in the event of Panjdeh being ceded to Russia could that Power claim any portion of Badkis lying south of a line drawn from Nauruzabad on the Hari Rud to Sari Yazi on the Murghab. North of this line the uninhabited and seemingly uninhabitable desert forms a natural boundary, just as it does east of the Murghab north of a line drawn from Sari Yazi along the border of the *chul* to Khwaja Salar. The surveys and investigations of Mr Merk and Captain Peacocke east, and of Captains Maitland and Yate west of the Murghab, have furnished a mass of weighty and conclusive evidence, showing clearly enough that the frontier, as understood to have been defined by the agreement of 1872, represents approximately the northern frontier of Afghanistan. That Russia has no sound evidence to adduce on her side, may be fairly concluded from the attempt that she has lately made to seize by force what she could not gain by argument. We may take the positions of the Russian outposts at Zulfikar, Ak-rabat, and Kizil-tapa as demarcating approximately the limits of Russia's claims. As shown above, the possession of the greater part of Badkis goes along with the possession of Panjdeh. The Hari Rud is fordable just opposite the Zulfikar Pass, and a straight road (leaving the pass to the left or east) leads thence southward to the Nihalsheni Pass and Kuhsan. This latter is an infinitely easier route than that over the Stoi Pass, on the left bank of the Hari Rud. It is difficult to conceive by what error or oversight Afghan outposts were not placed months ago all along the frontier claimed by the Amir. Colonel Stewart, I hear, warned the Afghan Government fully a year ago to do this. The Amir, however, or the Governor

of Herat, neglected to follow his advice. Whatever the neglect of the Afghans, it would at least have been supposed that the British Commission would, when on arrival here it found Pul-i-Khatun occupied by Russian troops, have at once caused Afghan posts to be planted near the Garmab and Paskunnur Passes opposite Pul-i-Khatun, at Adam Yulan and Kaiun-Kuyusi, and near the Zulfikar Pass. It is true that, judging by the action of the Russians on the Murghab, even the presence of these posts would not have checked their advance. Still it is just as well that the *onus* of aggression should rest with them, as indeed it has.

The relations between the Saruks of Panjdeh and those of Yulatan have always been of the closest description. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? Of course they intermarried, and almost every family at the one place had near relations at the other. Those of Yulatan have naturally been much exposed to the raids and attacks of the Tekkes, between whom and the Saruks no love is lost. The only point on which they appear to have tacitly agreed was, that the parties sent annually by both to the Nimaksar for salt should keep clear of each other, and so avoid the chance of a broil. Notwithstanding, however, their hostility to the Tekkes and their intimate associations with Panjdeh, the Yulatanis found themselves obliged to tender their submission to Russia when Merv was annexed. Vague and unreliable as have hitherto been all our maps of this country, it is clear that Yulatan is nearer to Merv than Panjdeh. It can hardly be less than 80 miles north of the latter place. This fact sufficiently explains why the Yulatanis found themselves compelled to attach themselves to Russia, while the Panjdehis sought to avert that fate by soliciting the protection of the Amir. The Governor of Merv nominated Saruk Khan Bairach to the chiefship of Yulatan after its annexation. The above remarks will explain sufficiently why the Russians placed an outpost of Yulatanis at Kizil-tapa. Had the Afghans attacked them there, their Panjdeh brethren would in all probability have risen against the Afghans.

There is no doubt that the Saruks often took advantage of

the intestine troubles of Afghanistan to intrigue with the Court of Bokhara. But though they sent deputations to the Amir, and accepted titles and *khilluts* from him, they never paid him taxes, as they did to the Afghan Government. In fact they had doubtless no other object but to get out of him what they could by an affectation of friendliness that they certainly did not feel, and professions of attachment that they were ready to forswear at a moment's notice. In 1868 they sent a contingent to assist the Amir of Bokhara against the Russians. Never, however, was Afghanistan more deeply involved in internal warfare and troubles than in this year. Had there then been a stable Government at Herat, the Saruks would not have been allowed to have any dealings with Bokhara.

I purpose to give a short account of the Salors, one of the Turkoman tribes now under Russian rule, and residing around Old Sarakhs. In 1834, Abbas Mirza, exasperated by their persistent raids and outrages on Persian subjects, fell upon them and carried them off *en masse*—men, women, and children—to Mashhad. There he offered them for sale. A branch of the Salors at Yulatan and Panjdeh sent over deputies and bought their liberty at ten *tomans* (Rs. 40) per head. In 1860 this tribe was settled at Yulatan. When the Persians in that year made their disastrous attempt to subdue the Tekkes of Merv, they detached a force against the Salors of Yulatan. The latter fled, with their families, household goods, and flocks, to Maruchak. The Saruks, whom the Tekkes had expelled from Merv about 1855, had settled at Panjdeh. They refrained from molesting, if they did not absolutely befriend, the Salors. But the Salors, who, for thieving and every other kind of villany, are *facile princeps* among the Turkomans, repaid them by stealing their sheep; and a few years later, fearing reprisals, went off towards Maimena, and settled at Sar-i-chashma-i-Chichakli, a few miles east of Chahar Shamba. Thence they commenced raiding in earnest on the Saruks, and in 1870 or 1871 came down on Maruchak and swept off all the flocks belonging to the Herzegi section of that tribe. The Herzegis, however, made a vigorous pur-

suit, overtook and attacked them, killed many, and returned triumphant to Maruchak with their recaptured flocks and a number of captured Salors. After this catastrophe, the latter divided into two sections, one of which, numbering some 2000 families, went and settled at Daulatabad and Kalah-i-Badkhat. The other, consisting of about 3000 families, having first made a raid on and captured many of the flocks and herds belonging to the people of Maimena, crossed the Murghab to Kara-tapa on the Khushk. This happened about eleven years ago. While settled at Kara-tapa, they were continually embroiled with the Saruks of Panjdeh, who finally forced them to migrate to Zohrabad on the left bank of the Hari Rud in Persian territory, beween Zulfikar and Pul-i-Khatun. Last year they migrated to Old Sarakhs, where a portion of their tribe had already settled; and they are all now Russian subjects. Their flocks graze as far south as Pul-i-Khatun, and south-eastward to Khum-gazar. They also occasionally come down to Agar-chashma to gather pistachios. The three sections of the Salors are named Yalawach, Gichara, and Karawan. They have an evil reputation even among Turkomans, and are said to be generally hated. So it would seem the Russians have made rather an acquisition. Twelve years ago, during the great Persian famine, the Tekkes came down and carried them all (about 5000 families) off to Merv, because they assisted the Persians in repelling Tekke raids. Three years ago, when the shadow of Russian annexation was overhanging Merv, the Salors were permitted to return to Persia, and are now mostly settled at Old Sarakhs.

24th March.

Ever since we arrived here, rumours of disaffection among the Turkomans and Uzbeks enthralled by Russia have been rife, and of late these rumours appear to have taken a tangible shape. On ground thus ripe for the seed of rebellion it only remains to set at work the revolutionary plough and harrow. The Tekkes and Salors cannot have learned to love the Muscovite in a year. Indeed it does not appear that the latter lays himself out to find favour in their sight. It is true that but a month ago it was anticipated the

Saruks might rise in revolt any day against their Afghan rulers. They are now said to be quiet and contented. Their hatred for the Tekkes is known. They contested with them the possession of Merv for seven years, and were ultimately worsted. They cannot wish to live under the same rule with them. Nor can the reputation that the Russians have earned for themselves in Central Asia be an inducement to others to seek their protection. Even the very acts of humanity that Russia has done among the Uzbeks and Turkomans have only increased her unpopularity. She has stopped raiding and abolished slavery, thereby robbing the Turkoman of a source of wealth, and the Uzbek of an aid to domestic comfort and to vice. No wonder they are both ripe for revolution. Woe to the Muscovite if he sustain defeat before Herat! It may have been with reference to this eventuality (promoting rebellion in Turkistan) that Lord Hartington said during the Kandahar debate in 1881: "Russia knows that we hold ourselves justified in resisting her interference in Afghanistan by any means in our power—by any means that may be most convenient and most suitable at the time. It is not necessary to say beforehand whether those means would be war in Europe or Asia—war by our own troops, or war by Afghan levies." We now know that we have another weapon at our command, and that is the seditious spirit prevalent throughout the Russian possessions in Central Asia. It would be easy enough to utilise such an arm; nor need we scruple to do so after Russia's repeated intriguing in Afghanistan. We have every reason to suppose that Russian agents are busy in India; and we have evidence to show that they would tamper with the Indian escort and followers of the Commission if they could. A native officer who recently went to Mashhad was accosted by a Persian, who, in course of conversation, began to compare Russian with British rule, very much to the advantage of the former. "Under the one," he said, "you can only become a Subadar, under the other you may rise to be an Alikhanoff."[1] The native officer told him bluntly that

[1] It is not generally known that Alikhanoff enjoys the handsome salary of about £300 a-year—less, in short, than a subaltern in the Indian army receives.

he would rather be a plain sepoy under Queen Victoria than a general under the Czar. In no point was General Skoboleff more egregiously exaggerative than when he wrote: "If we invaded India, promising to liberate that country from the English yoke, would we not have millions of Indians on our side?" Firstly, the Indians know well that a Russian invasion means an attempt to substitute the rule of the Czar for that of the present Empress—and in that they see no gain; secondly, it is notable that, in this the hour of success of the Mahdi and of a possible Russian invasion, the signs of loyalty among the native princes and people are redoubled.

In the present crisis the Persians appear to identify their interests with those of Russia. The shadow of Russian domination overhangs their very door, while the evidences of British power are more remote and indistinct. No wonder that the Persian officials now take no pains to conceal their Russophilism, and that Anglophilism is at a discount. We have seen more than one instance of this here of late. It is easy to see Russia's hand in this. Mashhad is easily within the sphere of influence from Ashkabad and Old Sarakhs. There is a Russian agent there, not to mention Sardars Hashim Khan and Tahir Khan, and other influential Afghan adherents of Sardar Mohammed Ayub Khan. That these latter are intriguing at this moment is a moral certainty. For this reason, and for watching Russian movements in trans-Caspiana, as well as for more facility of telegraphic communication, may Mr Condie Stephen's presence there have been deemed necessary.

Although it cannot be doubted that Russian influence is dominant in Persia, it would be wrong to suppose that there is no Anglophile party. On the contrary, the Shah's eldest son, Zill-us-Sultan, is the acknowledged head of it, and among both upper and lower classes many are the well-wishers of England. It is but natural that Russian domination, which is in plain terms bullying, should be cordially detested by a nation so brimming over with hyperbolical self-appreciation and a sort of hybrid patriotism as the Persian. Depend upon it, if they saw a loophole for escape they would take advan-

tage of it promptly. To attempt to foretell the future movements of the Commission now would be futile. Everything is at a standstill, pending the conclusion of the negotiations now being carried on between London and St Petersburg. It is, however, generally believed that by the time the knotty points under discussion are decided, the weather will be too warm to admit of so delicately constituted a man as General Zelenoy exposing himself to the risk of sunstroke or heat-apoplexy. So the work of the Commission will be relegated to the autumn. What shall we do, and where shall we go? Shall we stay here or shall we return to India? No one knows. The officers of the Survey and Intelligence departments are as busy as ever—those, at least, who are not engaged in drawing up a plan for the defence of Herat. But as a matter of fact, most of the surveys and investigations that bear on the question of the settlement of the Russo-Afghan frontier have been completed.[1] If the Russians are equally ready with theirs, it would appear unnecessary for the Commission to stay here longer. With the maps and the evidence *pro* and *con* before them, the two Cabinets should be able to fix the frontier. The survey operations now being carried on on either bank of the Hari Rud will be of assistance in settling the Perso-Afghan frontier, which assuredly should be settled before we return to India. It will certainly be a great advantage to the public to have good maps of this region. At present it is very evident that the vaguest notions of its geography exist. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, when the current maps are faulty and unreliable? The whereabouts of Sari Yazi, Pul-i-khishti, Ak-rabat, and the Zulfikar Pass—names that have of late attracted some attention—is evidently an enigma. The first named is a point on the Murghab, some 30 miles north of Panjdeh, where five or six weeks ago was

[1] When the Russian Commission did at last arrive and work was commenced in November 1885, its topographical survey was so strongly represented that it could put seven separate parties in the field at once. It was then that the British Survey officers realised how fortunate it was that they had made good use of the previous time at their disposal. Had both surveys started even, the Russian, owing to numerical superiority, must have outstripped the British.

stationed an Afghan outpost. About the 18th of last month the Russians came down, and either marched round or drove in the Afghan outposts at Sari Yazi and Urush Doshan, 18 miles north of Panjdeh, and occupied Kizil-tapa, an eminence one mile and a half north of Pul-i-khishti, which is a bridge over the Khushk river just above its junction with the Murghab—*i.e.*, about six miles north or north-west of Panjdeh, and only two or three miles from Ak-tapa, the position held by the Afghan garrison. Since then this garrison has been strongly reinforced by troops from Herat. Simultaneously with the Russian advance on the Murghab, a Russian outpost was pushed forward to the Zulfikar Pass on the right or Afghan bank of the Hari Rud, about 35 miles south of Pul-i-Khatun. A small post was also sent to Ak-rabat, some 35 miles west by south of Zulfikar, and 25 miles north of Gulran. Gulran is not on the Khushk river, but about 50 miles due west of the town of Khushk, and 30 miles east of Toman Aka on the Hari Rud, and north of the Paropamisus. It is a broad plain covered with the ruins and traces of ancient habitations. Roughly speaking, these movements were all carried out between the 8th and 20th of February. Since then the Russians have neither advanced nor retreated. In the face of these determined acts of aggression, General Lumsden, who had at first advised the Afghans to avoid hostilities, was obliged to counsel them to resist any further attempt to advance by armed force. The Russian posts were only composed of a few Turkoman horsemen armed with the Berdan rifle. Afghan outposts, greatly outnumbering them, were set down face to face with them.

I have already told you how the Afghan commander at Zulfikar scored off the Russian. The weakness of the Afghan outposts consists in their want of system and discipline. They are supposed to be relieved every ten days, and are accordingly provisioned only for that time. If the relief comes late, as it generally does, the old outpost quietly marches off home when their food is exhausted. The entire fault lies with the Afghan officers who permit such laxity and unpunctuality. Although the British Government demanded a fortnight ago

the withdrawal of the Russian posts, there is no sign of their moving. Indeed one of the latest of Mr Gladstone's statements in the House would imply that they will remain *stationary until England and Russia have come to some* decision or agreement. Mr Gladstone stated that there would be no further advances *on either side*. Presumably he meant there would be no further advances from the Russian side. The Afghans have certainly not advanced. It is irritating to watch the manner in which the Government have avoided giving either the House or the nation any reliable information about events here. It is really astonishing how calmly Ministers can sit in their chairs at home while they sacrifice brave men's lives all over the world. As for the inadmissible pretensions of the Amir, the Russian Government know full well that they are based on the grounds that Badkis and Panjdeh, Maimena and Andkhui, have acknowledged the rule of the Amirs of Afghanistan since the days of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Badkis may have been abandoned, but no one else has dared to occupy it. Ersaris, Salors, and Saruks may have settled in turn at Panjdeh, but all alike paid tribute to Afghanistan. The khanates of Afghan Turkistan have for brief periods, when Afghanistan was torn with internal war and sedition, thrown off the Afghan yoke; but no sooner was an Amir seated firmly on the throne of Kabul than they returned to their old allegiance. These are the Afghan grounds of rightful claim. Now let us glance at the Russian pretensions, which are—(1) the Uzbeks of the khanates and the Turkomans of Panjdeh have now and again coquetted with the Bokhara potentate (indeed the Saruks of Panjdeh sent a contingent in 1868 to help him to repulse the Muscovite invader); and (2), that most Uzbeks and Turkomans are Russian subjects, and therefore all ought to be. This is what the Russians call the "ethnographical claim."

The following extract from a letter from Panjdeh well illustrates the means by which the turbulent Saruk has been kept quiet and in good-humour: "I went to see the Afghan generals yesterday. They were very civil, but I have not yet inspected their position. We gave the Saruk headmen a

great dinner last night, at which I presided, eating out of the same dish with the most holy Khalifas, Mullas, and Kazis in the place. When we returned from the Afghan camp we found that, in the place of the 50 guests invited, some 100 to 150 were all sitting expectant. Each tribe filled a *khirgah* (*kibitka*). The Sukhtis were in one, the Harzegis in another, the Bairach and Aleshahs filled a third, and the Khorasanlis the fourth. We had not dishes for so many, so they all dined one after the other. I went in to dinner with the Sukhtis first, and at my 'Bismillah' all fell to. Mutton *pilau* and rice-and-milk sweets were the only courses. The Sukhtis being the more refined, ate them one after the other; but the rice and milk being very thin, they could only dip their fingers in and suck them. Others less particular mixed the sweets with the *pilau*, and so ate all the quicker. Some took a mouthful of each, turn and turn about. As soon as all were satisfied, the dishes were removed and filled again for the next lot. Tea was then brought in, at which I left the Sukhtis, and went and ate a second dinner with the Harzegis; and so on all through the four parties. The only thing I bargained for was a napkin and a spoon. At the end of the feast the head Mulla or Khalifa called for a blessing from on high on all present, and then another blessing for me, in the most affecting manner—such a stroking of beards! The dinner was followed by music, during which we were all present; though the others had not felt equal to swallowing four successive meals with barely a ten-minutes' interval, such as is invariably allowed at all public performances of a trying nature. On the Nauroz (New Year's Day of the Mohammedans, and especially a Persian festival, falls annually on the vernal equinox), the 21st instant, we have a race-meeting for all the Saruks, which will be rather fun. De Laessoe's horse is in hard training; but as his late owner does nothing but walk him about from morning to night, I am doubtful of the success of his so-called training. Owen is doing grand work here. One day he is away among the Saruks, and another day at Ak-tapa, doctoring all the Afghan soldiers. He is alone, with no establishment to help him, and has to make

up all his medicines and do everything himself. We are all living in *khirgahs*, pitched in a capital position on the crest of the plateau near the Sukhti hamlets."

At the time when the Russians first threatened an advance on Panjdeh, the Saruks openly informed the British Commissioner that unless a British officer was left among them they would be constrained to make their submission to the Russians. These Saruks were in fact in a difficult position, and what they desired was to remain aloof from a dispute between the Russian and the Afghan, and to give no excuse to either the one or the other to loot them. It is said that all the Panjdeh flocks that were grazing between Sari Yazi and Pul-i-khishti have fallen into the hands of the Russians. It is, however, most improbable that the latter will injure the property of a tribe whose country they desire to annex. Alikhanoff has told them that he means to make them subjects of the Great White Czar, and they are consequently ready, if advisable, to cry, "Le roi est mort; vive le roi!" Four thousand families of Saruks settled at Yulatan had already submitted to the Czar; and those of Panjdeh were, as a matter of course, strongly influenced thereby to follow their example. Yet up to the present time they have firmly adhered to their old allegiance to the Amir. But when they saw the Russian forces at their very doors, they felt that Afghan protection was insufficient. They perceived that their choice must lie between Russia and England. The former, it would seem, would be only their last resource, the resort of despair. So they begged that a British officer might be left with them as a token that they were British subjects. Therefore Colonel Ridgeway, Captain de Laessoe, and Kazi Mahomed Aslam stayed with them; whilst Captains Maitland and Yate explored the *chul* between the Hari Rud and the Murghab, and completed such surveys and inquiries in that quarter as were essential to the demarcation of the frontier. On the 20th February, when the main body of the Commission marched from Kalah-i-maur, Mr Merk and Dr Owen, with 50 lances under Captain Heath, were left there to support Colonel Ridgeway. Dr Owen shortly afterwards moved to Panjdeh,

and as has been shown above, has been of great service there. In the latter part of February the weakness of the Afghan garrison, the uneasy spirit prevalent among the Saruks, and the imminence of a Russian attack, gave just grounds for apprehension for the safety of the Panjdeh party. However, as the Russians remained quiet and advanced no farther, while strong Afghan reinforcements were moved to Panjdeh from Herat, the restlessness of the Saruks subsided. Colonel Ridgeway, who arrived here yesterday evening, states that they are now giving no trouble or cause for anxiety. Captains Yate and De Laessoe, Dr Owen, and Kazi Mahomed Aslam are still at Panjdeh, with Mr Merk, Captain Heath, and the 50 lances in reserve at Kalah-i-maur.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PANJDEH CRISIS, AND THE RETREAT TO TIRPUL.

25th March.

I VENTURED yesterday to predict peace for Panjdeh. I was premature. This morning a letter arrived from Captain Yate announcing that on the 22d General Komaroff and Colonel Alikhanoff had advanced from Aimakjar (25 miles north of Ak-tapa) to Urush Doshan (18 miles north of Ak-tapa) with a large force and several guns. He stated at the same time that the Saruks were quiet and contented, and would, he trusted, remain so. He had fully expected to see the Russian troops in front of Ak-tapa (the Afghan fort and position in the angle formed by the Khushk and Murghab rivers, and about six miles north-west of Panjdeh) on the 23d, but they had apparently halted. Colonel Ridgeway left Panjdeh on the 21st. It would almost seem as if his departure had been the signal for this advance. This readoption of offensive tactics by the Russians suggests that the brief burst of energy and patriotism exhibited by the Government three weeks ago has exhausted itself. They are relapsing, or have relapsed, into the old groove of lukewarmness and indecision. What becomes of Mr Gladstone's announcement to the House of Commons on the 6th March, that "the policy of the Government is a national policy, and one approved by the nation"? On the 13th March, too, he stated that "England and Russia had agreed that no further advance of troops should take place on either side." Another telegram has informed us that the British Government has formally demanded the

withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghan territory. What, then, is the meaning of this fresh advance? Is it the old story of the feeble remonstrances about Pul-i-Khatun over again? Yes: if the British Government had put its foot down firmly then, and given Russia to understand that she might choose between the evacuation of Pul-i-Khatun and war, the Commission would not now be in the critical position in which it finds itself. During the winter months the movement of Russian troops across the Turkoman steppes, or any part of Central Asia, would, owing to the intense cold and heavy snow, have been very difficult, if not impossible. On the contrary, the advance of a British army from India to Herat in winter is perfectly feasible. It is said that the Government of India was warned fully a month ago to be in readiness to despatch a force thither. It does not, however, appear that this suggestion has been acted on; at least if it has, the news has not reached us. For all we know, the Quetta garrison is at this moment our nearest succour. If we had 10,000 Sniders and a million rounds of Snider ball-cartridges, it would be something. The great weakness of the Afghan army is firearms. The *jazail* was a very good weapon when pitted against the brown-Bess in the earlier Afghan campaigns; but it did not count for much against the Martini-Henry and Snider in more recent ones. Nor will it contrast favourably with the Berdan, with which even the Turkomans in the service of Russia are armed.

26th March.

The latest reports (dated evening, 23d) received from Captain Yate at Panjdeh, state that as yet no further advance has been made by the Russians. Additional troops and ammunition are, it is rumoured, being brought up from Merv. The Russians have given out that the English will only fight them at Herat, and that therefore they mean to take Panjdeh and Maimena. Colonel Alikhanoff is said to have visited the Afghan camp at or near Ak-tapa in disguise. A rumour is also current that the Saruks of Panjdeh will, if the Russians attack the Afghans, fall on the camp of the British officers there. Such a statement, however, appears to deserve but

little credit. Proverbial as Asiatic treachery may be, it would seem to be both the interest and desire of the Saruks to remain aloof and neutral in any contest that may arise. It is possible that the Russians might egg them on to make prisoners of the British officers who have, by encamping in their midst, evinced the highest proof of confidence in their friendliness. They would scarcely urge them to further violence. That these Saruks would, if supported by British troops, resist the Russians, I have little doubt. But in the event of a Russian advance now, I believe they will remain passive. Still, in a moment of excitement, and perhaps of indignation, an outbreak might occur. I have just received an interesting description of the *gymkhana* meeting held at Panjdeh for the Saruks on the Nauroz festival.[1] I must postpone its publication; but the closing remarks I will quote now as illustrating the cordiality and *sans-façons* intimacy existing between them and the British representatives: "No sooner were the races over than all the headmen returned to camp to visit and drink tea with the political officers; and as a matter of fact, the first night they all remained and slept there, their hamlets being too distant to admit of their returning home and being back in time for the next day's sport. They all turn up at our camp, knowing full well that they are sure to find entertainment there. A *kibitka* fitted up as a guest-house is always ready for their reception. Even when asked to dinner, the guests will often insist on staying the night, and refuse to go home till morning." (*Note.—This speaks well for the quality of the wines.*)

"*At a dinner-party given the other evening to all the holy men in Panjdeh, a festive night was spent, with music and singing. The revered old Khalifa sang his song, and refusing to go home, spent the night in my* [illegible]. *There was no caste or food prejudice among the Turkomans. The humblest man will ask the British officer to share his meal, and give him of his bread and the same with the Mullas and* [illegible]. *At a big dinner the other night, they all ate of the same* [illegible]

[1] *See Appendix L. The account there given is from Captain* [illegible] *pen.*

... with the greatest gusto. The British camp is ... all day long—each one only anxious ... with the Sahibs. Dr Owen's ... every morning; and no sooner is ... Sahib, or Tabib as he is gener- ... his instruments, medicine-chests, operat- ... on a couple of mules, to one or ... where he spends the rest of the ... ailments of the many who throng to ... Afghan lines, he is most cordially ... with the troops have neither medi- ... but are always ready to help and learn, ... glad to attend. Often is the ques- ... with them if fighting occurs; and ... expressed at the thought that he will at

... much reason to fear that the Russians ... they were saying when they boasted that ... fight for Herat, and that Panjdeh and ... belong to them. Now let us contrast with ... regiment or two to Quetta, 550 miles from ... preparations that are being made by the Russians. Information received from authoritative or trust-worthy sources states that 20,000 Russian troops have crossed the Caspian from the Caucasus into trans-Caspiana. Of these some portion has already reached Ashk... to which point the railway and telegraph are being c... with all ex-pedition. About 50 miles are said t... ...leted. ... supplies are bein... ... miles from ... ...d Teje... ...s

are said to have recently arrived there from Turkistan. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to believe the reports that Komaroff has 3000 or 4000 men with him either at Urush Doshan, one march from Panjdeh, or between that place and Hazrat Imam, 25 miles nearer Merv. It is also said that the fort of Kaushid Khan is being strengthened by the Russians—doubtless as a safeguard against a Tekke insurrection. It would therefore appear that if any immediate advance in force is made by the Russians, it will be made from the Merv direction. Five weeks must elapse before a force from Ashkabad could reach the neighbourhood of Herat. Moreover, the *flooded condition* of the Hari Rud at this season would oblige that force to take the *route viâ Adam Yulan and Kungruli* (on which water is none too plentiful), instead of following the river as far as the Zulfikar Pass, or rather 10 miles south of it, and then striking south-east to the Nihalsheni, Khumbau, or Rabat-i-Surkh Passes. The Adam Yulan and Kungruali route mentioned above runs about 15 miles east of and parallel to the Hari Rud. It may be mentioned that two forces advancing from Sarakhs and Panjdeh can only be said to be on a connected front when they reach respectively the Zulfikar Pass on the Hari Rud (if the Adam Yulan route be taken, Ak-rabat or Karez Elias would be the points), and Chaman-i-bed on the Khushk. The latter is, as the crow flies, about 80 miles east of the former. North of these points the impassable *waterless chul* separates the two forces.

Before closing this, I may mention that I have no news of the recent movements or present whereabouts of Captain Griesbach or Captain the Honourable M. G. Talbot, both of whom are pursuing their avocations on the left bank of the Hari Rud in Persian territory. It is, I hear, intended to move the bulky portion of the Commission shortly to Tirpul. General Lumsden and staff and the cavalry will stay here. Captain Peacocke, who has been absent for a month, returned to camp yesterday. During the course of his journeyings, which terminated at Persian Sarakhs, he should have collected at least some information of Russian movements which may prove useful. It was originally intended that he should be one of

the trio selected to draw up and submit a plan for defending Herat, or perhaps I should rather say, to decide on and initiate the measures necessary to be taken for its defence. His absence prevented this. His travels, however, procured him the pleasure of the acquaintance of the Russian officer commanding at Pul-i-Khatun, who came to visit him, not of course from motives of suspicion or curiosity. Let us hope he cultivated it to some purpose. Captain Yate met at Akrabat, towards the end of February,[1] a young Russian officer named Lieutenant Lopatinski, who gravely assured him that General Zelenoy was even then at Ashkabad, if not at Sarakhs. Seemingly that young officer was misinformed. He had, however, a skinful (please understand that I do not refer to his own cuticle) of red Caucasian wine, and he invited Captain Yate to partake thereof. The latter in return invited him to dinner, and introduced him to "old Glenlivet." Their sole medium of communication, in addition to signs, was a Russo-English or Anglo-Russian Pocket Dictionary and Vocabulary,

[1] At the time when Captains Maitland and Yate explored northern Badkis, no allusion was allowed to be made to their travels. On 14th February 1885, they started from Ak-tapa towards Sarakhs. On the third day they passed an old intrenched camp called Ori Muhammad Amin, a relic of the raid made by Muhammad Amin Khan of Khiva some thirty-five years ago against Sarakhs, Merv, and Panjdeh. His force is said to have consisted of 10,000 horsemen, and each man had a camel for his water, grain, and food. Between the Khushk valley, near Ak-tapa, and Russian Sarakhs, water is found at one place only—viz., at Kaiun-Kuyusi, where there are three wells affording an abundant supply of good water. All the other old wells on this road are dry or choked up. But to revert to Muhammad Amin Khan. Like the Romans, his force seemingly intrenched itself every night. At that time the Jamshidis were refugees at Khiva. The force was made up of Yamuts, Goklans, Chaudars, Alehlis, Uzbeks, Jamshidis, &c. The father of Khan Aga, late chief of the Jamshidis, is said to have been at that time the Khan of Khiva's commander-in-chief. Having swept off all the Tekke (the Tekkes were then settled at Sarakhs) flocks in the *chul*, Muhammad Amin marched on to the Murghab, defeated the Saruks near Merv, and captured their flocks. He then attacked the Tekkes at Sarakhs, was utterly routed, and killed. The camp at Ori Muhammad Amin is about 250 yards square. Captains Maitland and Yate separated at Kaiun-Kuyusi on 21st February. The former went to Pul-i-Khatun, and thence *viâ* Kungruali and Zulfikar to Gulran. The latter struck south to the Nimaksar, then east towards the Khushk, and finally to Gulran. The *chul* between Merv, Yulatan, and Panjdeh on the east, and the Hari Rud on the west, is traversed by some half-dozen routes used by Turkomans. They are mostly waterless.

assisted by a slight acquaintance with French. They certainly seem to have made the most of the linguistic resources at their command. Among other things Lieutenant Lopatinski succeeded in imparting was, that General Komaroff had formed at Ashkabad a fine collection of antiquities from the sites of ancient towns and cities in the trans-Caspian province. He mentioned, as one of the most curious discoveries of antiquarian research in these parts, a mound or barrow at Yulatan in which three tiers of tombs were found. In the uppermost tier was found the skeleton of a human being in a sitting posture, the brass image of a dog, some Greek coins, and the skeleton of a rat or some similar animal. The Pocket Dictionary and Vocabulary seemingly contained no words or phrases competent to describe the nature and contents of the lower tiers. If, however, as one may suppose, the upper tier dates from the era of the Greek monarchies that arose after the death of Alexander the Great, the lower ones must belong presumably to an earlier period. This Lieutenant Lopatinski is the Russian officer alluded to by M. Vambéry in his recent article in the '*Nineteenth Century*' as organising a squadron of Turkoman cavalry. Talking of antique remains, I was riding a few days ago among the extensive remains of the old town near here, when I remarked several huge solid blocks of roughly hewn stone. One, I found on inspection, was hollowed out, and closely resembled a font. Though not an antiquary, I would venture, adopting as my guide the lucid and sound method of reasoning followed by the heralds who concocted Sir John Ridd's[1] coat-of-arms, thus to account for the presence of a font here. We know, I think from Marco Polo, that in the middle ages Merv was a metropolitan see of the Eastern Church. It is obvious that a diocese must be constituted of a number of parishes. What more natural than that Gulran was a parish in the diocese of Merv? Consequently Gulran had a church; a church must have a font; and here lies the font. *Quod erat demonstrandum.* I also found another interesting relic of bygone ages there. It was a tall rough-hewn slab of stone, on which were engraved the words:

[1] See Mr Blackmore's romance 'Lorna Doone.'

"Wafát yaft Shaikh Adam"—*i.e.*, "Here died Shaikh Adam." What a simple epitaph! It involuntarily carried my thoughts away to that glorious monument of the antiquarian research of the illustrious Mr Pickwick, that unique treasure the mysterious characters on which were transliterated by the sacrilegious Blotton into the words "Bill Stumps his mark." Alas that the only product of my antiquarian research in Gulran should have borne an inscription that cannot possibly be made susceptible of a double or mystic signification! I fear I cannot hope to aspire to the renown of "that immortal man."

By the by, Colonel Ridgeway reviewed the Afghan garrison at Ak-tapa before he left Panjdeh. I hope to describe this review as soon as any detailed information of the Afghan forces ceases to be valuable to the Russians.

27th March.

I reopen this to inform you that the latest reports from Panjdeh state that the Russians are now encamped in force before Ak-tapa. It is not apprehended that they will attack the Afghan troops. Their hope is, that their proximity will incite the Saruks to rise and either attack the Afghans or cut off their supplies. It is now no longer a secret that about the 20th February the Saruks had actually fixed a night on which to surround and open fire on the Afghans, who were then very weak in numbers, and actually had no ammunition but what they carried in their pouches. The Saruks can turn out 5000 fighting men, many of whom are armed with breech-loaders. There is not much doubt that had Alikhanoff, when he first came down to Pul-i-khishti (on 20th February), known the numerical weakness of the Afghans and their small stock of ammunition, he would not then have retired. He approached within sight of Pul-i-khishti, and was then warned that if he persisted in advancing he would be fired on; he withdrew. It is not too much to say that to Colonel Ridgeway is due the credit of having kept the Saruks quiet, and for five weeks delayed the appearance of the Russians in front of Panjdeh. It must be encouraging to him, as

to all of us, to see how those five weeks have been utilised by the Government.

We have still to consider the part that Persia will take in this struggle, if it comes to pass. In 1854, Persia offered to join the alliance against Russia, provided the Allies, and more especially England, would guarantee to her the restoration of the territories taken away from her by Russia in the reign of Fath Ali Shah, and the subsequent preservation thereof from renewed Russian aggression. Not unnaturally England declined so much responsibility. It is most probable that Persia will now renew this offer, should England accept it or not. It is no small undertaking to guarantee the frontier from Tibet to the Black Sea; and that is really what England would be undertaking on behalf of its allies and *protégés*, Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkey. And yet what an opportunity is this for breaking the power of Russia, for annihilating at one blow all the fruits of forty or fifty years of conquest and annexation! Persia will surely see that in this instance she has all to gain by joining the Anglo-Turkish confederacy. If she does not, she will find herself threatened by three hostile Powers on the east, south, and west, and on the north supported by a Power who values her as a tool, but not as a friend or ally, and whose semblance of friendship even means naught but the fleecing of its object. Were the Shah to depart this life at this juncture, and the Zill-us-Sultan to succeed, as he undoubtedly would in a time of turmoil and trouble, in seizing the throne from the Wali-ahd, there is not a shadow of doubt that he, and at least the majority of the Persians, would unite their fortunes with those of England. It is very clear that the only thing that would induce Persia to join England and Turkey now, would be a guarantee by the former Power that it would not only restore to it the tracts on its northern frontier appropriated by Russia, but would also give it the same assurances of assistance against foreign aggression as have been given to the Amir of Afghanistan. Now it seems to me that there is but one step which would enable us both to give this guarantee and to show conclusively that we meant to fulfil it, and that is the occupation of Herat by a strong

force of British troops. It has occurred to me that if England intends to let Khorasan pass into the hands of Russia, the defence of Herat against that Power loses in a great measure its *raison d'être.* If there be any truth in this view of the matter, then the present is the moment for extending to Persia our protection on precisely the same terms as we have accorded it to Afghanistan. If we mean to hold Herat, we ought to exclude Russia from Khorasan. We ought now to decide which of two possible southern frontiers we shall accord to the Russian possessions in Central Asia. These two possible frontiers are: first, the Turkoman steppes from the Caspian to the Oxus, and then the Oxus from Khwaja Salar to its source; second, the great Kavir, south of Khorasan, and the Hindu Kush. Most people will agree that the first-named or northernmost is most in unison with British interests. But only the occupation of Herat by British troops, and the safeguarding of Khorasan from Russia, can secure to us this frontier. It is needless to point out how greatly Persia might aid us by threatening the flank and communications of a Russian army advancing on Herat, and withholding from it all supplies. Although M. Valentine Chirol has assured us recently in the 'Fortnightly Review' that Persia is *in extremis,* I venture to hope that she has a kick left in her still.

CAMP CHASHMA-I-SABZ, 2d *April.*

On the 31st of March a mounted messenger came galloping into our camp and reported that there had been fighting at Panjdeh on the previous day. His arrival was at once followed by that of Kazi Saad-ud-din, who had also received similar news. The general tenor of the rumour was that the Afghans had gained a victory. It did not, however, appear that either of the messengers had been eyewitnesses of the engagement. One was sent from Kalah-i-maur by Mr Merk, with a letter stating that heavy firing had been heard towards Panjdeh on the 30th. Information from Afghan sources not unnaturally claimed an Afghan victory. Many were the surmises as to the accuracy or inaccuracy of the report. Some said that Captain Yate was to have held a rifle-meeting that

day for the Sáruks, as it was known that prizes for rifle-shooting had been promised some time before. Others suggested that the guns heard were fired in honour of the arrival of Komaroff or Alikhanoff. As the wind was blowing hard from the north that day, it is possible that rifle-reports might be heard at Kalah-i-maur. However, now that the truth or approximate truth is known, it is no good discussing the theory of probabilities. Before giving such brief details of the fight as are known, it will be as well to recount the events that preceded it.

On the 25th March information reached Gulran that on the 22d of that month the Russians had advanced in considerable force from Aimakjar (about 30 miles north of Ak-tapa) to Urush Doshan, 18 miles north of Ak-tapa, where (*i.e.*, at Ak-tapa) the Afghan force was posted. The report stated that both Komaroff and Alikhanoff were with them. It is needless to say that the British officers had no easy time of it during this crisis, their orders being to avoid a collision with the Russians, if possible. Had their orders been to fight, it would have been shorter if not easier work. As it was, they had, in accordance with their instructions, to do their utmost to prevent a collision between the Afghans and Russians, and to reassure and quiet the Saruks. It was expected that the Russian force would appear before Ak-tapa on the 23d. They did not arrive there till the afternoon of the 25th. It is perfectly evident from the behaviour of the Saruks that they were from the first actuated solely by fear of and not partiality towards the Russians. While the British Commission has been allowed by Mr Gladstone's Government to remain five months in Badkis as a signal monument of Russian insolence and governmental apathy, while such restrictions have been placed on the press that the voice of truth has been unable to reach the ears of the British public, during that time General Komaroff and Colonel Alikhanoff have spared no endeavour to intimidate and seduce from their Afghan allegiance the Saruks of Panjdeh. That similar influences have been at work among the Chahar Aimaks and the khanates of Afghan Turkistan is highly probable. In

short, while the British Commission has been amassing information and evidence, and executing surveys, for the purpose of honourably and justly demarcating the frontier, the Russians have been pursuing a course of duplicity and low treacherous intrigue that none but a semi-oriental Power would stoop to employ. *Grattez le Russe et vous trouverez le Tartare.* Never has the Russian evinced more clearly than in the affair of this Commission the touch of the Tartar. And yet one cannot refrain from a confession of admiration, reluctantly as it may be elicited, for the combination of boldness and diplomatic skill by which they have duped and led by the nose the Gladstonian Cabinet. They have so disgraced and insulted this Commission, that not only must it have lost all the prestige it had once gained in the eyes of the Turkomans and Chahar Aimaks, but the very Afghans doubt our friendship and will to aid them. I met a party of Afghan sowars to-day going to Ak-rabat. They wanted to know why we were going the opposite way. *Que repondre? Diable!* If only they knew how every man, at least every *military* man of the Commission, has longed to be allowed to fight side by side with them, and has pitied them when they were left to fight alone, with the Russians assailing them in front and the Saruks threatening their rear! There were 500 good bayonets and lances within 100 miles of them, and some 30 British officers; and if they had been marched to Panjdeh, and the Saruks given encouragement to array their 5000 fighting men by our side, then either the Russians dare not have attacked us, or they would have run imminent risk of defeat. The highest computation of the Russian force at Merv is 4000. It should be noted that the Tekkes of Merv can turn out 15,000 fighting men on an emergency, if they can turn out a man. The Saruks of Yulatan could probably muster from 2000 to 3000 men. It is obvious that this formidable body of ill-disposed subjects have not only to be kept under control pending success at Panjdeh, but have to be dreaded as open and ruthless enemies in the event of a repulse. But what is the use of crying over spilt milk? All these advantages have been thrown away.

Between the 22d and 25th March—*i.e.*, between the date of the Russian advance to Urush Doshan and their appearance before Ak-tapa—they appear to have been busy in bringing up ammunition, supplies, and reinforcements from Merv. A rumour got abroad that Alikhanoff had visited the Afghan camp by night in disguise. Probably a figment; but if true, we can only regret that the Afghans did not catch him. During those few days, too, the Russians industriously disseminated a report that the English would not contest with them the possession of Panjdeh and Maimena, and that therefore they meant to occupy both. The Russians, of course, had not the slightest difficulty about their emissaries, as the Yulatan Saruks could come and go freely between Yulatan and Panjdeh; moreover, the Saruk headmen, in the intervals of their visits to Colonel Ridgeway and Captain Yate, used to repair to Aimakjar and hear Colonel Alikhanoff's view of the case. During this period it is said that Alikhanoff sent threatening messages daily into Panjdeh; his object, of course, being so to alarm them that they would break out and perpetrate some deed that would, in their opinion, propitiate the Russians. What form such an outbreak would take no one could foretell. The Saruks had already once threatened the safety of the Afghan garrison, and might at any time do so again. Hitherto the influence of the British officers sent there had prevented any outbreak. But as the Russians drew nearer and nearer, the difficulty of controlling them increased. It was in vain to assure them that the Russian Government had promised the British that no further advance would be made on their side, and that their troops had orders to avoid a collision with the Afghans. The Saruks, with a sapience and insight into Russian character that our most veteran statesman might envy, were not to be caught in any such snare. That they valued these assurances at their proper worth, events have shown. Between 4 and 5 P.M. on the 25th, the Russian troops came in sight of Ak-tapa, and encamped between Kizil-tapa and the river. A little before 4 P.M., about 100 Yulatani Saruks in the Russian service had ridden up to the Afghan position, and only retired when they

were told that if they advanced farther they would be fired upon. When the Russian force arrived, a colonel came forward and asked to see the Naib Salar, who commands the Afghan force at Ak-tapa. The latter informed him that anything he had to say should be said to Captain Yate, the representative of the British Government, and declined to meet him alone. The colonel then withdrew, remarking that he expected to see them both in the morning—a remark that might mean anything.

As soon as the Russians came in sight, the Afghan troops got under arms and occupied the position they had prepared. They are described as looking cheerful, and by no means apprehensive of the result of an engagement. It is worth noting that the demeanour of the Afghan troops towards the British officers at Panjdeh was invariably pleasant, cordial, and respectful. They were determined to open fire on the Russians on the first signs of an advance. On the left bank of the Khushk, close to Pul-i-khishti, were posted the Herati cavalry, two guns, and several companies of infantry in an intrenched position. Some canals on the same side of the bridge, and trenches on some rising ground half-way between the bridge and Ak-tapa, are also said to have been occupied by infantry. Ak-tapa itself was held by the Khassadars, or irregular infantry of the Chahar Aimak. Some doubts of the reliability of these latter were entertained, apparently with justice. A few hundred yards north of Pul-i-khishti and on the left bank of the Khushk, a small mound was held by two companies of Afghan infantry intrenched. The Afghans remained in their trenches during the whole of the night of the 25th. It was a miserable, cold, rainy night, so they must have suffered considerably. Captain Yate rode down from Panjdeh to Ak-tapa on the evening of the 25th and visited the Afghan position. In the evening, on his return from Ak-tapa, he visited Juma Ishan, the chief Mulla, and his brother the Khalifa, the most influential men in Panjdeh, and sons of the former Khalifa of Merv. They promised to persuade the Saruks to remain quiet and interfere neither with the Russians nor Afghans. However, it seemed more than probable that

any efforts at persuasion on their part would prove utterly ineffectual. Notwithstanding the polite assurances of the Juma Ishan that "while the British flag is flying over us we are happy and content," it might be safely surmised that the sight of the British flag would not long counterbalance the presence of a Russian army. The Afghan estimate of that army was 900 infantry and 300 cavalry. Later reports say that before the attack on the 29th further reinforcements came up. A Tekke contingent was also present; the number of guns was not specified. The strength of the Afghan force can be best estimated from the following account of a review held by the Naib Salar in honour of Colonel Ridgeway before his departure from Panjdeh:—

"*Panjdeh, 16th March.*—The Naib Salar held a review of the Afghan troops at Panjdeh to-day for inspection by Colonel Ridgeway. The latter, accompanied by Captains Yate and De Laessoe, Kazi Mohammed Aslam, and Sardar Sher Ahmed Khan, were received by the Naib Salar and Yalantush Khan Jamshidi, Governor of Panjdeh, at the Naib Salar's tent at 10.30 A.M., where tea and refreshments were served; while the troops, under the command of General Ghaus-ud-din Khan, were being drawn up in line immediately behind their present position on the northern crest of the plateau between the valleys of the Khushk and the Murghab.

"General Ghaus-ud-din received the Naib Salar and Colonel Ridgeway with a general salute, standing and saluting himself in front of the line. He remained on foot after the salute was over, until requested to mount by the Naib Salar.

"The line was formed from right to left as follows: (1) A mule-battery of 4 brass 3-pounder mountain-guns; (2) a field-battery of 4 brass 6-pounder smooth-bore guns; (3) the Kabul Regiment of Infantry; (4) the Kandahar Regiment of Infantry; (5) four companies of Khassadars (Irregulars); (6) the Kabul Regiment of Cavalry; (7) the Herati Irregular Horse; (8) the Chahar Aimak Irregular Horse, consisting of one squadron Hazaras, one squadron Jamshidis, and one troop Firuzkuhis.[1]

[1] Of the corps here enumerated, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 alone are said to have

"After riding down the line, the Naib Salar and Colonel Ridgeway took up a position in front, and the force marched past on their way to quarters. The march-past was a rough one, but creditable considering that half of the troops present had never done such a thing in their lives before. The mule-battery led the way, and went past well, one division on mules, the other on ponies; the latter was especially good. The field-battery was capitally horsed and looked serviceable, keeping distance well as they went past. They had no line of ammunition-waggons. The Kabuli regiment, almost entirely composed of Logar men, went past as well as could be expected; but the men had no uniform, and are only armed with Enfield rifles. The Kandahari regiment had likewise no uniform, and is only half armed with Enfields, the remainder with smooth-bores. Both these regiments went past in six companies, each of some 38 files,—a total of about 900 men. The regular cavalry regiment known as the Shahriyari (King's Own) Regiment, enlisted at Kabul, but from no particular locality, followed the infantry. They are well horsed and accoutred, but their carbines are only Kabul-made smooth-bores. The men appeared to be good material. They went past in four squadrons of about 30 files each. After them followed the Khassadars, four companies of some 30 files each, armed with old flint-locks and weapons of all shapes and makes. Then came the Herati and Chahar Aimak Horse, bringing up the rear, all fairly mounted, but utterly undrilled and badly armed."

TIRPUL, *4th April.*

From the above description the strength of the Afghan force at Panjdeh may be put down at about 1200 infantry, 800 cavalry, and eight guns. In fact they but little exceeded the Russian force; and when the contrast of arms, drill, and discipline is taken into consideration, it is obvious that a suc-

fought well in the action on the 30th March. The irregular horse and foo[t] were either not engaged or broke at the first encounter. The prevalent ide[a] that the Afghans far exceeded the Russians in numbers is absolutely erroneou[s]. I have reason to believe that the Russians had a decided superiority [in] numbers over the Afghan troops actually engaged.

cessful resistance to a Russian attack was not to be hoped for. It appears, moreover, from the Afghan version of the engagement, that a body of Tekke levies, armed with Berdan rifles, took part in the attack on the Russian side.

On the 26th March, Captain Yate went down to Ak-tapa and had a meeting in the afternoon with Colonel Zakrchewski, Komaroff's Chief of the Staff. Previous to this meeting both Afghans and Saruks were much excited and anxious to attack the Russians. The fact of this interview appears to have exercised temporarily a quieting and reassuring influence on the Afghans and Saruks. But Russian action itself speedily dispelled that short-lived illusion. With Captain Yate were Captain de Laessoe, Dr Owen, Kazi Mohammed Aslam, and Sardar Sher Ahmed Khan. Colonel Zakrchewski was attended by a large number of junior officers. The British officers were courteously received, and invited to lunch. Meanwhile the Cossacks on one side, and the sowars of the 11th Bengal Lancers on the other, had shaken hands (not on the Oxus but on the Murghab) and taken stock of each other. The Russian officers, it is said, were much struck by the bearing, *physique*, and soldierly appearance of the 11th Bengal Lancers escort. And well they might be. However, it is well known that good judges have pronounced our finest Indian cavalry to be equal to that of most Continental Powers. It does not appear that any practically satisfactory result came of this interview. The Russian "pretensions" put forward are described as "extravagant," and such as could not for a moment be entertained. At parting on the 26th, Captain Yate invited Colonel Zakrchewski and the other Russian officers to a small collation on the following day. The offer was accepted. The site selected for this friendly interchange of civilities was "in front of the Afghan vedettes, who are only a few yards from the Cossack outposts." Sufficiently suggestive this. Whether this collation was ever partaken of by the British officers, and whether the political discussion of which it was but the medium ever took place, [illegible]. On the 1st April the whole of the [illegible] [illegible]

Lumsden, Colonel Ridgeway, and the cavalry, who were all provided with mule transport, started for the bridge over the Hari Rud at Tirpul, where it arrived on the 3d April. The first march was to the top of the Au-safid Pass (eight miles—the Au-safid is a very easy pass), the second to Chashma-i-sabz (11 miles), and the third to Tirpul (24 miles). The weather was for the last thirty-six hours a succession of thunderstorms, heavy rain, and hail. It is pouring hard now. The Panjdeh and Kalah-i-maur parties were to have reached Gulran yesterday, and then the whole were to march from Gulran to-day. We expect them here to morrow.

Since we left Gulran the following information about the fight that took place on the 30th has dribbled out. The Russians are said to have demanded the withdrawal of the Afghan troops from the position west of Pul-i-khishti. The Afghans refused to withdraw. The Russians then attacked. According to an Afghan report, the attack was commenced by the Tekke levies. These fell back under the Afghan fire, and then the Russian infantry opened fire and advanced. The Afghan resistance, according to reports based on other than Afghan statements, was very stubborn. General Ghaus-ud-din Khan was wounded. Two companies of the Afghans were killed to a man in the trenches. Evidently the thick of the fighting took place on the left bank of the Khushk at Pul-i-khishti. Finally the Afghans were completely routed, and retreated towards Maruchak. The British officers, who, of course, were ordered to keep aloof from the fighting, remained to see the issue thereof, and some hours after the Afghans were defeated, withdrew by the Khushk valley to join Captain Heath and his escort of 50 sabres at Kalah-i-maur. It is more than surprising that the Saruks appear to have kept aloof from the fighting, to have neither molested nor pursued the retreating Afghans, nor interfered in any way with the British officers. The Panjdeh party is said to have left the scene of action about mid-day, and so doubtless had to spend a very agreeable cold rainy night on the bleak *chul.* They took only 3½ days to reach Gulran.

In the meantime we may trace some of the results, of an at least temporary if not permanent effect of a backward policy. In the first place, we have at least temporarily lost Panjdeh and the Saruks. As it is well known that the Chahar Aimaks were intently watching the progress of affairs at Panjdeh, and intended to be guided in their conduct entirely by the issue of events there, we may conclude that they, too, are lost to British influence. I hear, however, that Yalantush Khan, chief of the Jamshidis and Governor of Panjdeh, has done excellent service in the late crisis. I am therefore hopeful that his influence may keep the Jamshidis true to their Afghan allegiance, and that their example may influence the Hazaras and Firuzkuhis. I may add that the Afghans placed little reliance on the hearty co-operation of the Chahar Aimak levies at Ak-tapa. We have placed at the disposal of Russia all the supplies, grain, flocks, camels, and horses of Panjdeh, and those of the Chahar Aimak. We might, had we been determined and energetic, have, even if we could not effectually oppose the Russians at Panjdeh, at least removed out of her way or destroyed there the sinews of war.

A day or two ago I was informed that the Russians had collected at Ak-rabat a quantity of supplies. Ak-rabat is 25 or 30 miles north of Gulran, 30 miles east of the Zulfikar Pass, and has nothing whatever to do with the Rabat-i-Surkh Pass, commonly known as the Robat Pass. What can supplies there be intended for but an advance on Herat? It is also reported on good authority that the Russian outposts at Zulfikar and Ak-rabat have been augmented to a strength of 300, part Cossacks and part Turkoman levies. But with all the Afghan cavalry, regular and irregular, might we not have swooped down on Ak-rabat, surprised and driven out the outpost, and destroyed the supplies? Might we not also have choked up the wells at Kungruali, Ak-rabat, Kizil Bulak, and perhaps even at Adam Yulan? In the present swollen condition of the Hari Rud, a Russian force must advance from Old Sarakhs by this route. But nothing of this has been done. I see the papers declaring that the Commission at Gulran is

in a position to defend the Ak-rabat Pass. I may state once for all that there are so many easy passes over the Paropamisus that to defend any one is impossible. Many people seem to believe that we have 1400 or 1500 fighting men here; we have not 500. Nor have we any guns; nor, if we had, have we any position for them. Herat itself is considered untenable; and thanks to the Amir, who will not allow a British officer within eight *farsakhs* of that city, no intrenched position has been prepared. By the by, I understand that the Amir's visit to India has been kept a profound secret in Herat. The Naib-ul-hukumat alone is said to be aware of it. This, however, may be regarded as doubtful.

The last, but not the least, thing that we have lost by our inaction, is the confidence of the Afghans. They say now that we are about to desert them, as the Russians deserted them in 1878. They are angry with us and suspicious. Kazi Saad-ud-din is said to have openly declared that we had no right to egg them on to fight the Russians, and then neither join in the fight nor give the Afghan troops good rifles to fight with. Would that we had them to give! We are probably in more danger now from their resentment than we have been at any time since we crossed the Helmund near Rudbar. Even the Herati troops look askance at us, and ask why we are making tracks the wrong way. How then about the Kabulis? Are they likely now to welcome us as their fellow-defenders of Herat? The fact is, that a defence of Herat seems now hopeless. The reports say that the Russians have 4000 men and 60 guns at Sarakhs, and 2700 men and some guns at Merv. It appears that a portion of the reinforcements from Turkistan have been sent on from Merv to Sarakhs. Now what have we or the Afghans to oppose to these? Had the Government acted with promptitude, we might even now have had 5000 men in Herat and 20,000 more on the road up. But for all we know here, as yet not one man has left Quetta. In three weeks at the latest the Russians can enter Herat. If England declares war, they will assuredly do so. Nothing is easier for them

than to pour troops into Afghan Turkistan, and then advance on Kabul *viâ* Bamian. This is a contingency for which we must be prepared. It will not do to commit a large force in the Herat direction, and then find out that the Russians are advancing in force *viâ* Kabul.

Here we are at Tirpul, on the left bank of the Hari Rud. We could defend this bridge, I think, against heavy odds as long as our ammunition lasts. We have only 200 rounds per man for infantry, and 100 for cavalry. But unfortunately our position here is no defence to Herat, which is on the right bank, and 60 miles distant. The Russians have only to leave us squatted here, and march straight on that city. In fact we are in a very insecure position. We can scarcely hope to hold out against a Russian attack in any locality near Herat, or even in Herat itself. The Afghans are filled with resentment; so if we withdraw towards Farah, we may meet with a warm reception. If we withdraw into Persia we are neutralised. I am informed on good authority that the Herat garrison can boast of 50 or 60 guns, mostly, if not all, muzzle-loading smooth-bores, and 400 or 500 breech-loading rifles, together with a large and extensive assortment of flint-locks, matchlocks, brown-Besses, and percussion-muskets that would be an acquisition to any museum of antiquities. Yes; I think if we intrenched ourselves in company with a few thousand aborigines and their primitive weapons (reputed to be of the iron age, though some are suggestive of the ages of flint and bronze), we should find no difficulty in emulating Leonidas and his 300 Spartans at Thermopylæ.

It is said that incontestable proofs have been obtained that Colonel Alikhanoff offered rewards for the heads of the British officers at Panjdeh. He only valued them at Rs. 400 each. The audacity and love of bravado that have throughout characterised him, as well as his oriental origin, and the persistency with which he has declined to show any respect for the peaceable character of the British Commission, all lead me to believe that such an act is in every way worthy and characteristic of him. Moreover, Komaroff must have felt

the necessity of forcing the British representative and his party to quit Panjdeh. But Captain Yate showed intentions of holding his own there, if possible. We can therefore understand why General Komaroff delayed sending the escort for which Captain Yate asked, and in the meantime urged the Saruks to use threats to induce him to take his departure. Captain Yate ultimately found himself obliged to withdraw.

On arrival at Tirpul we found Colonel Stewart, Major Holdich, and Captain Gore there. It was generally believed that they were going to select and intrench a position near Herat. Their engineering genius has been limited to the repairing of the Tirpul bridge. Captain Griesbach is here, having returned from his geological trip in the Persian hills. Captain Talbot is still in Persia.

I should like to have told you something of the greenness and freshness of the country we have traversed from Gulran to Tirpul—of the crimson, yellow, and other coloured tulips, the sprouting asafœtida, the leek or garlic, the excellent vegetable called in Persian *zirishk*, the wild rhubarb, the mushroom, and many other wonders of the land that we sought out; and of the many old *karezes* and irrigation channels of the Gulran plain, mementos of its ancient prosperity. The fact is, this country is a natural vegetable-garden. However, the political position here, to my mind, quite dwarfs all botanical interests, which I may safely leave in the hands of our botanist, who does not hesitate to admit that in his eyes the Central Asian question, Panjdeh, Herat, and Maimena, and the supremacy of England or Russia in Asia, are matters of to him but fleeting interest and importance. For him there is one vital interest—the furtherance of the noble science of botany. So he prays for a fine dry day, with the valley of the Hari Rud as a field for botanical research.

5th April.

If the 3d instant was a very unpleasant day, with its thunderstorms, rain, hail, and boisterous blasts, the 4th was infinitely worse. It rained all the night of the 3d, and the wind

grew chillier and chillier, and last night the rain became snow. We thought often of the party we had left behind at Gulran, and of the still more hardly used refugees from Panjdeh. But we little thought what they really were suffering. Surely we had better have been at Panjdeh and fought the Russians. We might have lost more heavily, but in a better cause. It is deplorable that such a disaster should happen at this moment. We all feel that it has been hard enough to retreat at all, but to have to emulate the retreat from Moscow is adding injury to insult. It is difficult to say where our list of obligations to the Gladstonian Cabinet will stop. When the Gulran party reached the mouth of the Au-safid Pass, they found it a swollen running stream, with a bed of soft mud into which horses, mules, and ponies sank deep and floundered. The horses of the cavalry could with difficulty struggle through it, so you may imagine how it affected the mules. The water was bitterly cold, the wind piercing; the laden animals kept floundering and falling—the drivers had to paddle about in the water, and soon became half paralysed with cold. When the top of the Au-safid Pass was reached by General Lumsden, the main body of the cavalry, and others, the wind, irrespective of its bitterness, and the snow and sleet that accompanied it, was so powerful that it blew General Lumsden and his horse off the path down a steep bank. Fortunately neither was much the worse for it. It was, in fact, just all that man and horse could do to struggle against the violence of the wind. It was then proposed to halt and camp in the first sheltered spot come to. For some inexplicable reason it was decided to go on to Chashma-i-sabz. Had they camped in the Au-safid Pass many lives would have been saved. Starting from Gulran at 7.30, the cavalry reached Chashma-i-sabz early in the afternoon. Arrived there, they and all the officers, the native *attachés*, and others with them, found themselves without servants, without food, without tents, and nothing to drink but muddy water. Captain Heath and Lieutenant Wright started back with some sowars and ponies to bring in helpless stragglers. They went back three or four miles, and having then picked up as many men, utterly

powerless and some dying, as the ponies could carry, they returned to camp. The men of the 11th Bengal Lancers behaved admirably throughout. A number of them came into camp almost paralysed with cold, and were tended and cared for by their comrades with the greatest kindness. Many men were seen to deprive themselves of the warm clothing they so much needed, to give it to their suffering fellow-soldiers. They had but one tent among them, and throughout the night, it is said, they took it turn about by tens at a time to sit in this tent. Sleep there was none, neither for officer nor man, except the sleep of death, and that was only vouchsafed to a few. That many natives prayed for it, I have little doubt. Britons are not so fond of death as all that. Such servants and syces as had come in were either prostrate and numbed —in fact "crumpled up"—with cold, or, as it was graphically expressed, shivering and chattering idiots. After some search it was found that a few mules with tents had struggled in. Two or three of them were given to the sowars and Persian mule-drivers and *farrashes*, and in two small mountain-battery tents a dozen officers huddled. For food they had half-a-dozen biscuits, a quarter-loaf of bread, and a small piece of tinned beef. That is all the food they tasted from 8 A.M. yesterday to 2 P.M. to-day. Any small quantity of wine and spirits that was available was reserved exclusively for the use of the exhausted and benumbed natives. The cold was intense, the floors of the tents were puddles, and the violent wind repeatedly drew the pegs. Almost every dog in camp died that night. Nine, it is said, took refuge in one of the officers' tents, thereby preserving their own lives and keeping their owners warm. As for those poor fellows who had no tents, they lay down anywhere in a *poshtin* blanket or a *numdah*, or in their ordinary clothing, and passed the night as best they could. The animals stood starving and shivering, saddled as they came in and without *jhools*, some wandering away in the night in search of food and getting lost. Those that were securely picketed turned their tails to the snow and biting blast; next morning their tails were a bunch of icicles. In the morning those poor fellows who had to pass the night in the open air

were found covered with snow. General Lumsden was out at 5 A.M. on the 5th to see what could be done, both to aid and rescue stragglers, and succour those who had lain out all night in the cold. As one of the officers said, when they first went round in the early morning among the figures lying motionless on the ground, some silent, some moaning, they shuddered to think that half of them might be dead. General Lumsden did all in his power to assist and relieve the miserable natives. Subadar Mahomed Husain Khan managed to collect wood, light a fire, and make some tea. Here all in distress were welcome, and having had a warm and a cup of tea, retired in favour of the next batch. Three men were found dead in the morning, and many others were, it is feared, frost-bitten. Large numbers were missing, including some sowars. Many horses were found dead. It is hoped (but almost against hope), however, that most of those missing will turn up again all right. It was decided this morning that some of the officers should remain behind and collect baggage and stragglers, while the remainder should come on here and send off some food, wood, blankets, wine, spirits, &c., &c., for those left at Chashma-i-sabz. Captain Yate, Dr Owen, and Lieutenant Wright stopped behind. Sir Peter Lumsden, Colonel Ridgeway, Captain Barrow, Major Bax, Captain Heath, Lieutenant Drummond, and a portion of the cavalry and Mr Merk, came on here. On their arrival, some Afghan sowars with wine, spirits, and tinned stores were sent off; and Major Rind soon after despatched fuel and rations. But the latter cannot arrive till to-morrow. I very much fear we have not heard the worst of this disaster yet. If the exposure has told severely on the British and native officers, and cavalry and others, who were well clad and mounted, what must have been the effect of it on the followers? Such a disaster is particularly sad at this moment, and has naturally exercised a deeply depressing influence on all of us. We who had marched up here with the loss of but two men, who throughout the severe winter at Bala Murghab and the trying march thence to Gulran had lost two or three men at most, have now at one fell swoop lost perhaps five or six times that num-

ber—not to mention kit, office-records, tents, &c., &c., which may or may not be recovered. Captain de Laessoe went to Kuhsan direct to request the Afghan officials to send out a party to assist in recovering baggage and stragglers. Our own transport has also gone out. It is a most lamentable mishap, and at this moment we can ill afford to lose either men or arms. Fortunately the ammunition was saved. It is the more lamentable, as it might have been avoided by camping either at the foot or near the top of the Au-safid Pass.

As none of the officers who were at Panjdeh during the engagement of the 30th ultimo have yet arrived, but little fresh news has transpired. On the 29th, Captain Yate had an interview with the Russians, and during that, nothing, it seems, was said to imply that an attack would be made next day. The key of the Afghan position was the trenches on the left bank of the Khushk. Not only for tactical, but also for political reasons, it could not be evacuated as the Russians requested. Not only would such an act have been viewed by the Saruks as a distinct proof that the Afghans were about to retire before the Russians, but it is also said that the Afghan commander himself stated that his own men in their present temper would not stand it; so there they remained. The attack commenced early on the morning of the 30th, and lasted barely half an hour. The Afghans had been out all night in the trenches, and were wet and cold. Their rifles and ammunition, at no times of the best, were not improved by exposure to the rain. It is said that the Afghan fire was in consequence quite ineffective. It could be easily distinguished from that of the Russians, who fired rapid volleys, while that of the Afghans was likened to the fire of a section firing independently. The Tekke cavalry led the Russian attack, and when near the Afghan trenches wheeled outwards right and left, revealing the Russian infantry advancing. The latter immediately opened fire, advancing all the time, and finally carried the trenches with the bayonet. Two companies of Afghans under a colonel, on the left of their position, were killed to a man. The remainder retreated with some loss across the bridge at Pul-i-khishti. There appears to have been

little or no effort made to hold any of the positions near Ak-tapa. In fact, doubtful as they were as to the behaviour of the Saruks, it was scarcely to be expected that the Afghans could fight with confidence. Indeed it was from the first a foregone conclusion in favour of the Russians. General Lumsden advised the Afghans to resist a further Russian advance, and Lord Granville expressed his approval of that advice. Presumably the latter was not aware that to oppose the Afghan troops unaided to Russians was a mere sacrifice of life. Presumably he did not consider that the defeated Afghans would turn upon and upbraid us for telling them to fight, and then leaving them in the lurch. What do Afghans know of diplomatic procrastination, or rather of supineness and indecision cloaked under the garb of diplomacy? The Saruks on the whole behaved well; and for this we have to thank the influence exercised, first by Colonel Ridgeway, and during the critical period preceding the *finale*, by Captain Yate. The Russians did not attempt to pursue the Afghans, nor did the Saruks molest them in any way. The British officers withdrew about mid-day, some five hours after the fight, when Captain Yate found his position no longer tenable, carrying with them all their kit, only to lose the greater part of it a few days later on the Au-safid Pass. They marched from Panjdeh to Gulran in less than four days; the distance is over 100 miles. Captain Heath and his escort waited for the Panjdeh party, and then retired with them. Mr Merk, who had been to Panjdeh on the 29th, left on the morning of the 30th, as soon as the fighting began, to give Captain Heath warning. As it rained and blew hard on the 30th and 31st March, and also on the 2d April, on which latter date they reached Gulran, they must have had a very unpleasant time of it. But what they had to endure then was nothing to the experiences of the 4th April.

The Retreat of the Five Hundred.

12*th April.*

We are only 500, not 1500 *plus* artillery, as the English ress maintains. A retreat of 500 is but a small affair; so e can hardly expect a Xenophon to arise and write it. In efault of a Xenophon we must make the best of the substi-ute. At the beginning of last February it was a question whether we should move from Bala Murghab to Panjdeh, or whether we should march to Gulran. The former presented the better chance of putting a check on the Russian spirit of aggression; the latter accorded with the timid policy of the Government. Decision was finally given in favour of the latter. So we came to Gulran and spent some pleasant weeks on its green plains—those plains that, as M. Lessar and M. Kropensky calmly informed a British audience at the Century Club in Westminster, Russia requires as pasturage for her subjects the Salors. And do those gentlemen conceive that the Amir may not want the same for his subjects? And are not salt-lakes as much a desideratum to an Amir as to a Czar? It is certainly entertaining to peruse the methods by which Russian diplomatists endeavour to hoodwink British audiences. It is delightful to see the 'Moscow Gazette' assuring the world that their subjects the Salors are a quiet harmless tribe, of peaceful, pastoral, and agricultural pursuits; whereas every one here knows that a more rascally collection of unscrupulous, murdering thieves never existed. Even the Tekkes and Saruks look askance at them. About 1860 the Saruks drove them from the neighbourhood of Panjdeh because their thieving habits were intolerable. Then they went to Maimena, and seizing every ox, horse, or sheep they could lay hands on, made off into Persian territory. There they settled and lived until the Tekkes, whom they had also exasperated, carried them off bodily to Merv. At an earlier period the Persians had once taken them all prisoners to Mashhad—men, women, and children—and sold every mother's son o them as slaves, simply because they were an unbearable publi nuisance. Their own fellow-tribesmen bought them at thre

tomans per head. The Russians, when they occupied Merv, settled the Salors at Old Sarakhs. It is for such preservers of the public peace as these that Russia claims Badkis.

The article published in the 'Moscow Gazette' of the 25th February last, illustrates only too plainly the extreme negligence with which the Afghan frontier from the Oxus to the *Hari Rud was defined in the agreement of 1873.* It is worthy of notice that Maimena, to which the Russians here have of late advanced claims, is therein admitted to be Afghan territory, "the *desert* beyond belonging to independent tribes of Turkomans." The mere designation of the country west of Maimena to the Hari Rud as *desert* is sufficient proof of the then utter ignorance of the geography of this tract. It is indeed doubtful if Amir Sher Ali was then asked to define the frontier he claimed for Afghanistan from the western boundary of Afghan Turkistan to the Hari Rud. Yet it has since been repeatedly demonstrated that the Turkomans settled at Panjdeh have for years paid tribute to the Amir, *and that an Afghan governor has frequently resided in Panjdeh.* The 'Moscow Gazette,' however, asserts that the very vagueness of the agreement of 1873 gives Russia a *right* to annex all the territory now occupied by Turkoman tribes. At the very best of times the presence of a nomad tribe in any one locality furnishes but the shadow of a claim. The Amir of Afghanistan does not base his claims to Panjdeh on *the grounds that any particular tribe of Turkomans occupies* it. He asserts that the land is Afghan territory, and that whoever has settled there has paid him tribute. If the Russian Government persists in its theory of an ethnographical frontier, the Amir will have no choice but to order the Saruks to evacuate Afghan territory. If they prefer Russian rule, they can move northward; but I will give presently some *reasons for concluding that the Saruks have of late evinced* no wish for Russian rule. But where rights are vague, the preponderance of one over the other is not of much importance. The question is one of might, not right. It is a question whether the British or the Russian Government is the stronger. The Russian wants to get hold of the produc-

tive salt-lakes of Yar-Yulan and the rich pastures of Badkis, and to obtain a good strategical frontier south of the waterless *chul*, which effectually prevents any lateral communication between troops on the Khushk and on the Hari Rud. The 'Moscow Gazette' openly claims the Paropamisus as the future frontier; in other words, it would advance the Russian boundary to the mouths of the Baba, Ardawan, Sangi-Kotal, Rabat-i-Surkh, and other easy passes connecting Badkis with the valley of the Hari Rud. The Amir, on the other hand, claims all Badkis as far north as Naurozabad on the Hari Rud and Sari Yazi on the Murghab.[1] It is of course obvious to any one that the sandy uncultivable desert north of Badkis and the khanates is the natural frontier. If Russia, not content with that, seeks for one drawn farther south, it is simply with the view of ultimate further aggressions. Any State really desirous, as she hypocritically pretends to be, of peace, would at once recognise a pathless desert frontier as the best guarantee of future abstention from conflict and dispute. But Russia is not animated at heart by any such wish. She is instigated solely by territorial greed and the hope of acquiring a good basis for a further advance as opportunity offers. I have indeed heard a civilian of the English Foreign Office maintain that the Paropamisus was as good a strategical frontier as the desert 100 miles north of it. Certainly for Russia it is an infinitely superior frontier strategically, but for the Amir and for Herat nothing could be worse. Consequently it is England's duty to insist on the desert being made the Russo-Afghan boundary. It is for this reason that Mr Gladstone has shown most culpable weakness in admitting for one moment that any portion of Badkis was "debatable" land. It is Afghan territory, and should have been firmly maintained to be such by the British Government. However, as Mr Gladstone has not blushed to admit in the House that Russia last November refused point-blank to withdraw from Pul-i-Khatun, and that the Liberal Government collapsed under such a refusal, we may anticipate any admission.

[1] At the Rawal-pindi Conference the Amir had limited his claim to Zulfikar, Gulran, and Maruchak.

The latter part of the article in the 'Moscow Gazette' is a good specimen of special pleading. It has but a weak case, and makes the most of it, not hesitating, of course, to misrepresent facts, to advance false statements and reasons, and to ignore contradictory circumstances. It concludes thus: "*It is difficult to see how 30 or 50 versts (20 or 33 miles) more or less can contribute to the security of Herat. It would no doubt be possible, if both parties wish to give a proof of impartiality, to withdraw the Russian frontier somewhat to the north.*" On the contrary, in such a country as that between Merv and Herat, a few miles one way or the other is of the highest importance.

We left the Commission at Gulran. Let us rejoin it. Towards the close of March a further retreat to Tirpul was mooted. The news of fighting at Panjdeh, which reached us on the 31st, decided the question. On the 1st April (some of us, I think, felt as if the Russians were making April fools of us) the infantry and heavy baggage moved. The remainder followed on the 4th. Ever since the 20th of March we had had most unpleasant weather. On the 4th April it reached the climax of unpleasantness. I have given in my last letter some account of the disastrous consequences of the terrible storm that raged that day. On the 6th April I rode out to Chashma-i-sabz, where the wreckage of one-half of the Commission was being collected. The camp itself was a symptom of the demoralisation that follows on such accidents. It had all the appearance of an Afghan camp in ordinary times. There was no attempt at order. A few dirty tents were standing here and there. Men, kit, and horses were here, there, and everywhere. In a small 80-pounder five British officers were chumming together with that *bonhomie* and that sense of self-pride which will not permit a man to live in luxury himself while his fellow-men are in want and misery. The first claim of tentage was of course conceded to the hospital, in which already were lying many men frost-bitten and prostrated by cold and exposure. Nine dead bodies only had, at the time I reached Chashma-i-sabz, been brought in. Of course the first efforts had been directed to saving life.

On the morning of the 5th, when it was decided that the majority of the officers, with all the cavalry and followers able to march, should move on to Tirpul, Captain Yate, Mr Wright, and Dr Owen volunteered, or were selected, to stay behind. Mirza Hasan Ali Khan also, overcome by the sense of responsibility resting upon him on account of all the Persian mules and mule-drivers under his charge, requested to be allowed to stay behind to reorganise his mule-train. Despite these praiseworthy motives, it is with regret that I must relate that the mules and mule-drivers obstinately refused to be reorganised. The former strayed wilfully all over the country (it was told me in confidence that the drivers let them loose), and the latter used shocking language to their superiors. If some one had paraded a small portion of their persons before a good stout withy, it would have served them right. A more good-for-nothing set of scoundrels than these Persian muleteers were never created. Not only would they do no work, but they looted the kit that was strewn all over the country. No sooner did I reach Chashma-i-sabz than an Afghan officer came over and lodged a charge against the Persian muleteers and camel-drivers of rifling corpses and looting baggage. I had previously heard that the inhabitants of all the country round had promptly swarmed to the scene of the disaster and looted all they could lay hands on. As a matter of fact, both had a hand in it. The kettle was but calling the pot black. Indeed so great is the temptation afforded by such an opportunity, that I have little doubt that a very large number of the natives present and capable of movement, be they Persian, Afghan, or Indian, all had a finger in the pie. Probably the shepherds pasturing their flocks on the plains below and the people of Kuhsan carried off most of the booty. It is said that these storms, called *kulak* or *buran*, are of not uncommon occurrence here and in the Elburz range. No one ventures out in them. If a caravan is so unlucky as to be caught in one of these terrific storms while crossing the Paropamisus, it is invariably looted by the people of the Kuhsan district. The Governor of Herat says he will recover the lost property. I take leave to doubt

it. A good deal of it will be found in our own camp if a search be made. The pack-saddles of the mules will, I feel confident, prove a sure find for hard cash.

When I arrived on the afternoon of the 6th, I found Dr Owen in camp ready to attend to the sick as they came in. It must be noted that although the Hari Rud is only distant 25 miles from the Paropamisus, still the climate of the latter is infinitely colder and severer than the former. Rain on the Hari Rud is snow and sleet on the Paropamisus; a boisterous wind on the one is a violent cyclone on the other. Hence it was that we at Tirpul had no suspicion of the scene of misery and disaster that was being enacted within 30 miles of us. It is said that the torrent that poured down the north side of the Au-safid Pass on the 4th instant, increased in volume and vehemence after the Chief Commissioner, the cavalry, and most of the officers had reached the top of the pass. So strong indeed was the current, that mules and ponies were swept off their legs; so deep the mud, that pack-animals of every description floundered and sank in it, never to rise again. On the morning of the 5th it was found that 23 sowars, a very large number of followers of all sorts and conditions, and nearly all the baggage, were missing. The weather on the 5th was almost as severe on the Paropamisus as it had been on the 4th. However, Captain Yate and Lieutenant Wright set off manfully in the face of wind and sleet, and toiling all day (they had had nothing to eat for thirty hours), brought in by nightfall eighteen men who could never have survived another night in the cold. The last three men they brought in from the top of the pass on their own horses, they themselves walking. It must be recollected that scarcely a sowar, follower, or animal in camp was fit for duty that day. Neither man nor beast had had any food since the morning of the 4th. All were pinched and semi-paralysed with cold and starvation. Of course the first object was to save human life. No attempt was made that day to bring in the dead or the baggage. The Au-safid Pass must have presented a strange heartrending sight. Imagine the ground deep-strewn with snow, wafted here and there into great

drifts, a wind bitterly cold and of terrific force careering along, and hurling sleet and snow in the face of the wayfarer with stinging, blinding velocity! What is that dark silent object half hidden in the snow? Is it alive or dead? Perhaps, as the *numdah*, or *poshtin*, or other article of warm clothing under which he has sought shelter is raised, a movement, a shiver, a groan, or even a curse, and a prayer to be left alone to die, indicates life. Many of the poor fellows' naturally dusky feet were enormously swollen and perfectly white with frost-bite. They are lifted up, placed on a mule or pony, made as warm as possible, and then sent sharp to camp. Sometimes the groans, cries, almost shrieks of the sufferers penetrate to the ear through the mist of sleet and snow before the eye can detect aught. In one case a pitiable band was found insulated on a hillock surrounded on every side by snowdrifts, and shouting for aid in tones of despair—that is, five of the number were, two were already dead. Add to this the bodies of the dead, lying literally crumpled up with cold, and the stiffened bodies of horses, mules, and camels. I understand that 70 mules and 25 or 30 camels are now missing, of which a considerable number are dead. Add to this the losses of the 11th Bengal Lancers in horses and ponies. It is a fortunate thing that no sowars of the 11th perished; two were missing for some days, but ultimately reached Tirpul in safety after considerable wanderings. Of the followers, 24 died, including Indian camp-followers, Persian muleteers, camel-men, and Afghans. Kazi Saad-ud-din appears to have crossed the pass with General Lumsden, and to have suffered accordingly; but Nasrullah Khan, a Persian who, with his suite, has for private reasons [1] made our camp his home for a month past, thought discretion the better part of valour, and encamped in or on the north side of the pass. I met him marching into Chashma-i-sabz

[1] He was governor of the Jam district. Unable to tolerate the exactions of the Wali of Khorasan, he took refuge in the Commission camp. Subsequently the Shah objected, and in deference to his representations Nasrullah Khan was directed to leave the camp. He then went to Mashhad, where, for a time at least, he lived in a sort of open arrest.

on the 7th. He probably knew by experience what a *kulak* is, and the folly of marching in defiance of it.

On the 6th, which was happily a sunny day, Captain Yate and Lieutenant Wright continued their researches on the north side of the pass, and not only sent in more sick, but also collected the dead and some of the baggage together, preparatory to conveyance to Chashma-i-sabz. On the evening of that day they were also joined by Lieutenants Drummond and Rawlins, who on the following day went up the pass and lived there until the 10th, when everything that had not been looted was recovered and brought to Chashma-i-sabz. On the evening of the 7th, too, 50 men of the 20th Panjab Infantry arrived. They were sorely needed, as the sowars of the 11th, weakened by exposure, and with feet and hands swollen and stiffened with cold, were hardly fit for the arduous duties entailed upon them. Meantime rations, medical comforts, mule and camel transport, had been sent out, and, with four officers and 50 hearty sepoys, the work progressed apace. On the 8th, over 30 sick men were sent in on mules to Tirpul, and the remainder followed on the 9th. Among them were two Afghans shot through the right fore-arm with Berdans during the fight of the 30th ultimo. On the 10th and 11th, the baggage, troops, and followers who had not gone before, came in. The dead were mostly buried out there. It must be remembered that the baggage was lying strewn all over the country for some miles around. The animals, when deserted by their drivers, wandered whither they listed. Both alike had to be recovered, if not looted or dead as the case might be. The two most important things that were *not* looted were probably the cipher codes. Imagine the flutter in governmental pigeon-holes if they had been lost! Not a few rifles were stolen, and many a poor follower's little hoard. The medals of the sowars of the 11th were in many cases cut off their tunics. An Afghan camel-driver told me that on the 5th seven Turkomans, armed with good rifles like English rifles (Berdans), appeared in the pass and looted. Could these be Tekkes from the Russian outposts? The Afghan authorities were so good as to place

at the disposal of General Lumsden, for the recovery of the baggage, a body of Herati sowars. It is generally believed that these men did more looting than any one else. If they ever did condescend to bring in anything for us, it was invariably accompanied by a minute list as long as your arm, which some one was expected to tally and receipt. The kit on the north side of the pass was in many cases found almost entirely buried in mud, after the torrent had subsided. The existence of one load was made known by the protruding head of a polo-stick. Up to the 8th, much was hidden under the snow. On the evening of the 7th, I came across a mule and a donkey lying dead side by side in a deep drift of snow which twenty-four hours before had probably concealed them altogether. No portion of the baggage was plundered more freely than Dr Owen's hospital. His surgical, meteorological, and eye instruments were all taken, as well as many other valuable articles impossible to be replaced here. His medicines were found strewn on the ground, but the bottles were not broken. These freebooters had a certain method in their looting. If they had time, they invariably re-closed a box or package, and arranged the kit so as to dissimulate, at first sight, the abstraction of any portion of the contents. Sometimes they were unexpectedly disturbed. One robber had evidently been surprised in the act of cutting off a finger to get a ring. The knife was found lying on the dead man's breast, and the finger half severed.

The account which I gave in my last letter of what occurred at Panjdeh between the 22d and 30th of March was based on hearsay evidence. I purpose now to give a narrative of those events as told by eyewitnesses. The report of the Russian advance to Urush Doshan on the 22d was somewhat premature. However, it appears to have been generally known that the Russians were about to advance. Messengers continually arrived at Panjdeh reporting the assemblage of troops at Aimakjar (1000 infantry, 500 cavalry, and 6 guns was the strength as first reported; later reports say that not less than 3000 men encamped at Kizil-tapa), and the forwarding of great quantities of ammunition from Merv

[illegible]

that Alikhanoff informed Ghaus-ud-din (last November) the next time he came to pay him a visit he would not him to tea, but would come and pour it boiling hot down throat. It is a curious fact that the first thing that he s to Ghaus-ud-din on their meeting was that he was just goi to have some tea, and would he join him. The Afghan d clined with more curtness than courtesy, and the Russia seemingly thought it not a favourable opportunity for makin him swallow it willy-nilly. It must be admitted that, according to reports received, the Afghan general gave vent to his feelings very freely on this occasion. Some of his remarks, which were directed against Colonel Alikhanoff (late Ali Khan) as a renegade Mussulman, and intended to work on Mussulman sympathies, drew, it is said, murmurs of applause from the Turkoman sowars. This in itself is no small proof of the limited affection the Tekkes and Saruks of Yulatan feel for their Russian conquerors. That same day too, so report says, Sarik Khan, the chief of Yulatan, sent a message to the headmen of the Saruks of Panjdeh and urged them to fight against and bring disgrace on the Russians. Every Turkoman here, he added, longs to see them defeated and disgraced. It is noteworthy that on the 28th all the Russian vedettes were composed of Cossacks, in place of Turkomans as before. Alikhanoff finally withdrew from behind the Afghan lines, with renewed blessings from the lips of Ghaus-ud-din. The former is spoken of by those who have seen him as a man of singularly fine presence, and of impressive manner and mode of speech.

In the meantime some 200 Russian infantry had crossed the Murghab in a boat and ascended the right bank towards a post of Afghan Khassadars. The Naib Salar, seeing this manœuvre, passed 200 of his infantry over in a boat and advanced to meet them. Posting his men on an eminence, he rode ahead and informed the Russian officer in command that unless he retired he must direct his men to open fire. The Russians then withdrew, followed for some 500 yards by the Afghans shouting and cheering.

When informed of this the second Russian effort to pro-

voke the Afghans into firing the first shot, Captain Yate at once wrote to Colonel Zakrchewski and pointed out that such acts were in distinct contravention of the assurances of the Russian Government that its troops would do nothing to precipitate a conflict with the Afghans. He also pointed out that the Amir's orders to his generals were to resist any Russian advance, and that they must sooner or later take steps to stop these acts of aggression. In his reply to this, Colonel Zakrchewski deprecated any intention on the part of his Excellency General Komaroff to bring about a collision, and complained of the advance of the Afghan troops and outposts. The only ground, apparently, that he *had for this allegation*, was *that the Afghans had been* strengthening their intrenchments west of Pul-i-khishti, and had pushed forward a small outpost on the right bank of the Murghab in order to give early information of any advance of Russian troops.

These acts of aggression on the part of the Russians at first produced a restless spirit among the Saruks. The headmen came flocking into the British camp with renewed offers of assistance to drive out the Russians. These of course had to be refused. On the 28th March, Captain Yate went to Ak-tapa and examined the Afghan position, with a view to ascertain if Colonel Zakrchewski had any solid ground for his assertion that the Afghans had advanced. He found there was none. So he wrote and asked for another interview. On the morning of the 29th, he got a note from the Naib Salar asking him to come down to Ak-tapa. On arrival the Naib handed him two letters, the one in Russian and Persian from Komaroff, directing him to evacuate the left bank of the Khushk altogether, and the right bank of the Murghab above the junction of the two rivers, before 4 P.M. The other was a letter from Colonel Zakrchewski accepting the invitation to an interview for 3 P.M. that day, and requesting that the Afghan generals and governor might also be present. The Naib then gave him a third letter, written in Persian and in the same handwriting as the first, requesting an interview with the Naib

without the knowledge of the British officers. It will be seen from this how well it was that no direct communication whatever had passed between the Afghans and the Russians. It was the only way to prevent effectually even a suspicion of treachery spreading among the Afghan soldiery. Having advised the Naib to have his troops in position before 4 P.M. and to remain at their head, Captain Yate, accompanied by Mr Merk, Captain de Laessoe, Dr Owen, and Sardar Sher Ahmed, proceeded towards the Afghan pickets, outside which they met Colonel Zakrchewski with the other colonels and several junior officers and 25 Cossacks. After lunch, the champagne and cheroots of which appeared to meet with decided appreciation from the Russian officers, business commenced. Colonel Zakrchewski inquired why no Afghans were present; and when informed that they now considered their proper place to be at the head of their troops, he looked rather nonplussed. He then stated, in formal words which had evidently been prepared for the occasion, that his Excellency General Komaroff could not rescind his ultimatum, and that the insolence of the Afghans could not be tolerated any longer. When asked to give instances of the Afghan insolence, he said they had detained for twenty-four hours a Turkoman who was a Russian subject, that three of their vedettes had come close up to the Russian vedettes and used objectionable language, and that they had advanced beyond the position occupied by them when the Russians arrived on the 25th. He further added that General Komaroff had reported to the Russian Government that Pul-i-khishti was in the hands of the Russians, and that such being the case, he must make good his word. Captain Yate drew their attention to the fact that the trifling charges of violence brought by them against the Afghans were a mere farce in comparison with the advance of two large bodies of Russian troops on the 27th. To this Zakrchewski had of course no reply. He then pointed out that the Russians had never been at Pul-i-khishti. When they first came down about 20th February, the Afghans had stopped them at Kizil-tapa. Finally, he informed them that their intention of attacking the Afghans

was in distinct contravention of the assurances given to Lord Granville by M. de Giers, and that, although a trifling question of withdrawing vedettes and pickets to a little distance might be attended to, no abandonment of the left bank of the Khushk by the Afghans was possible. He further requested that the matter might be again submitted to General Komaroff, and that he might be favoured with a reply. Here the interview ended, and both parties having shaken hands, withdrew. In the consultation that followed with the Afghan officials, the Naib Salar said that if he abandoned the left bank of the Khushk, his troops would suspect him of treachery and melt away. Yalantush Khan said that the withdrawal of the Afghan troops would be the signal for a rising among the Saruks. It was therefore decided to fight if the Russians attacked. I may add that the opinion prevalent among the British officers was that the Russians would not attack. The event, however, proved that their surmise was wrong. It is worthy of remark that as the British officers rode down the Afghan lines that evening, almost all the men stood up, salaamed, and welcomed them. This is perhaps the first time in the annals of history that an Afghan has exhibited such a display of good feeling towards Britons. Let us hope it is not the last. The Russians and Afghans having been disposed of, there still remained the Turkomans to be soothed and put to bed in peace. It was consequently 3 A.M. on the 30th before one or more of the British officers laid their heads on their pillows. About 6.30 they were aroused from their slumbers by the sound of firing. Mr Merk (who had only come in from Kalah-i-maur the previous day, and was just starting to return to his post) rode straight off to warn Captain Heath at Kalah-i-maur. The others awaited the issue of events. Soon the Saruk headmen, including Juma Ishan, Khalifa Rahman Verdi, Aka Mohammed, Mehtar Bai, and others of the most influential men, arrived. The Saruk populace was seen swarming on horse and foot towards the scene of the conflict. It was a misty, drizzly morn, so but little could be seen.

For the details of the Russian attack, none but Afghan

evidence is forthcoming. About 7.30 the sounds of f became weaker, and it was at first thought that the Afg had repulsed the Russians. It was not so, however. distant sounds of firing heard were away on the right bank the Murghab, up which a body of Russian infantry had a vanced to dislodge the Khassadars there posted. Both t Russian flank attacks being successful, the Afghans commence to retire across the Khushk by the Pul-i-khishti (brick bridge The Afghans made a fatal error in not strengthening their lef flank. They trusted to the cavalry, which was simply mown down by the Russian infantry fire. Authentic reports say that the Russian force at Yarim-tapa was 3000 strong. If so, they doubtless attacked in overwhelming force. It is uncertain if the Khushk was fordable, or if the Afghans attempted to retire across it on horse or foot. If, however, reports be true, they were terribly decimated before they got across and out of range of the Russian fire. I have heard the loss estimated at from 500 to 900 killed and wounded. I can hardly believe that even the lesser figure is not too high. As for the Russian loss, nothing is known of it. But as the combatants came to hand-to-hand fighting, it is probable that they lost not a few. The poor Afghans, with their Enfields and smooth-bores, their caps and the powder in the nipples damped by a night spent in the rain, could do but little against the Russian volleys. The roll of the Berdans was clearly distinguishable from the pop-pop of the Afghan independent firing. With this mingled the roar of the Afghan guns. It is not yet known whether these guns were withdrawn or abandoned. It was all over in less than an hour.

TIRPUL, 12*th April.*

To continue my account of the events of the 30th. As soon as the firing began, two sowars of the small escort of the 11th Bengal Lancers (11 men) were posted as sentries on the wo approaches to the British camp. Some Turkoman guides vere th [illegible] to ascert[illegible] result of the engagement. etwee[illegible] a [illegible] d and reported that e R[illegible] th[illegible] the Khushk. By

this time all the leading Saruks were assembled in the British camp. They were told to keep quiet. That they refrained from harassing the Afghans is a signal proof of their confidence in British protection. They did not even touch the wounded and stragglers. Some few wounded came into the British camp, and were tended by Dr Owen. They, as well as several stragglers, accompanied the British camp to Gulran. About nine o'clock the Afghan troops were seen dimly through the mist retreating in perfect order along the road to Maruchak. The Naib Salar sent in a messenger to ask whether he should retreat by the Murghab or the Khushk valley. He was advised to retreat by the latter, but nevertheless chose the former. There would probably have been a difficulty about supplies on the Khushk, whereas at Bala Murghab they were obtainable in abundance. It is said that all the Firuzkuhi and Hazara settlers on the left bank of the river at Bala Murghab, as soon as they heard of the Afghan defeat, packed up their goods and chattels and made off to their *own country*. They probably dreaded the defeated Afghan more than the victorious Russ. The Jamshidis on the right bank stayed where they were. Why? Because the river was swollen and unfordable. Latest reports say the Afghan army is now encamped at Kalah-i-nau and Khushk.

Shortly after the Afghan force hove in sight, Yalantush Khan, with a body of Jamshidi horse, rode up to the British camp. Captain Yate informed him, as well as the Turkoman elders present, that it was his intention to remain with them, and have an interview with the Russians as soon as circumstances permitted. Yalantush expressed his willingness to remain, and sat down among the Turkomans in Captain Yate's *khirgah*. A letter was then written to Zakrchewski offering Dr Owen's services for the wounded. This was intrusted to Aka Mohammed, chief of the Sukhtis, and one of the most influential men in Panjdeh, and to Mehtar Bai, head of the Dadakuli Sukhtis, for conveyance to its destination. On their return they reported that Alikhanoff had met them, taken the letter and passed it on, but had vouchsafed no reply, except to order them to collect their men and attack the British

camp at once. Truly an action worthy of a civilised Pow
On hearing this the Turkoman elders all said that there w
sure to be a disturbance, and that the British officers shou
withdraw at once. At the same time, some threatening lan
guage was used towards Yalantush Khan, who thereupon
became decidedly alarmed, and was for being off at once
Captain Yate, however, requested him to remain beside him,
and he did so. A second letter was then written to Zakrchewski, demanding an interview, and a guard to protect the camp. To this likewise no reply was given, and affairs grew momentarily more critical. Turkoman after Turkoman came in to Aka Mohammed reporting that the Russians had ordered the Saruks to attack the British camp. Finally, a man rode in and said that Alikhanoff had offered 1000 *karans* (400 rupees) for the head of each British officer. Others say that this noble offer was first made to Aka Mohammed and Mehtar Bai in person, and reported by them accordingly. Just at this moment, too, the son of Saruk Khan, chief of the Yulatani Saruks, rode up clad in a coat said to have belonged to Shah Murad Khan, the slain colonel of the Logar regiment, and bearing in his hand a pair of boots recognised as belonging to General Ghaus-ud-din. These latter, he said, General Komaroff had sent as a present to Captain Yate. A gross act of dastardly insolence such as this showed that neither courtesy nor generosity was to be expected from so ignoble a foe.

The order for packing and marching was therefore issued. As the loading progressed the general excitement momentarily increased. Many Saruks were now hanging round the camp, and the chance of a good loot must have sorely tempted them. But the headmen remained stanch. Yalantush Khan's men were the first to move off; and their chief mounted to fol-
ow them, but dismounted again at Captain Yate's request.
t was important to avoid any appearance of undue hurry
panic. Shortly afterwards Yalantush succeeded in get-
ng quietly away, and proceeding with his men through
e Sukhti hamlets, took up a position on an eminence
yond. At last the loading was completed; and then
ptain Yate, who, with Kazi Mohammed Aslam and Sardar

Sher Ahmed Khan, stayed to the very last, having seen the mules across the bridge over the broad deep canal hard by, rode out through the Saruk hamlets, escorted by Juma Ishan and Aka Mohammed. Only a few commissariat stores and one or two tents were left behind. However, it was very little use saving kit at the risk of life, only to lose it in a miserable hurricane a few days later. It is said that a body of Tekke horse rode into the British camp a few minutes after it was evacuated. A native who went back for something was hustled out by Mehtar Bai with the words, "Do not you see the Tekkes coming?" Captain de Laessoe's cook also was left behind, and rescued by a Turkoman. He subsequently described vividly how the Tekkes and Cossacks came in and stripped him, and would have killed him had the Saruks not interceded. How much of this is invention is hard to say. The Saruks themselves undoubtedly took a prominent share in looting what little was left, but touched nothing till after Captain Yate's departure.

It was afternoon when the British camp got under way. The guides gave out that they were going to Maruchak. As soon as the party was clear of the Saruk hamlets, leave was taken of the headmen who had adhered to them so stanchly through thick and thin: soon after, Yalantush Khan, leaving ten of his men, also took leave and rode on to join the Afghan troops. About seven miles from Panjdeh the British party left the road and rode straight across the hills towards Kalah-i-maur. At sunset a halt was made to adjust loads, and short halts from time to time to let the rear mules close up. It rained incessantly. At midnight the Khushk was reached, and as it was difficult to descend into the river-bed and impossible to cross the flooded river in the night, all lay in the rain on the bare hillside till dawn. The mules stood laden and the horses saddled, and everybody huddled close together to keep out the cold. At daylight they descended into the valley of the Khushk. There they were met by a Turkoman sent out by Mr Merk. On his (Mr Merk's) arrival at Kalah-i-maur, Captain Heath had packed up and moved a few miles up the river.

It appears that two different reports as to the route taken by the Panjdeh party were brought in to Captain Heath. Hence, no doubt, he was unable to send out his sowars to meet and escort them to Kalah-i-maur. The river was so deep that mules could not cross it, so the Turkoman led them up the right bank of the river for several miles, until they met Subadar Mahomed Husain Khan with some camels. The loads were then transferred, and all crossed over about 9 A.M. Captain Heath's party was found loaded and ready to start; so after resting and feeding the horses and mules, the march was continued to Chaman-i-bed along the left bank of the Khushk. The mules floundered and fell in the mud and mire, and it was long after dark when the camping-place was reached. Then it was found that all the supplies which had been sent on the previous day, were on the right bank, and could not cross the swollen stream. So man and beast had to go more or less supperless to bed. Here Ressaldar Major Mahomed Husain met them, and reported that though the Jamshidi guard were still taking care of the supplies at Islim, they were in hourly dread of being attacked by the Cossacks and Akhal Tekkes at Ak-rabat, whose numbers had been increased to 400 (others say 300). On the morrow (1st April), after a night's rest, which the Panjdeh party, having marched 60 miles in thirty hours and had no sleep for forty, certainly needed, they marched 25 miles, camping 10 miles beyond Islim. The river being in flood, the water was not, as usual, undrinkably salt. Near Islim three Tekkes were met by the 11th Bengal Lancers. These were recognised by Captain Yate and his orderlies as belonging to the party they found at Ak-rabat at the end of February. Lieutenant Lopatinski, they said, was at Zulfikar. As some of the Afghan fugitives betrayed an uncommon itching to make daylight through the captives, they were kept under Captain Yate's protection until the Afghans had passed, and then quietly let go with a polite note to Lopatinski. It appears to me that throughout this business the British officer has scored a decisive victory in point of generosity and display of soldierly and gentlemanly feeling over the Russian.

Captain de Laessoe and Subadar Mahomed Husain Khan remained behind at Chaman-i-bed on the morning of the 1st, to get the camels with the supplies and office-records across the river. The river was still very high, and the camel-men refused to cross. At last some stray Turkomans appeared on the scene and betrayed an intention of looting. However, Subadar Mahomed Husain Khan pulled out his revolver, and at the sight of that they hesitated. Shortly after, two or three sowars of the 11th Bengal Lancers hove in sight, and then the chicken-hearted thieves bolted. The camels then crossed without loss; but Captain de Laessoe and the rear-guard did not get in till 2 A.M. on the 2d, on which day the march was continued to the Commissioners' camp at Gulran (30 miles), which was reached about dusk. On the 3d there was a halt. The remainder of the story I have already narrated.

It is scarcely necessary to expatiate on the conduct of the Russians. The facts speak for themselves. The treatment accorded by them to the British officers is only an exaggeration of that which the Russian Government has accorded to the Commission. It should, however, be noted that Komaroff did all in his power to provoke a collision, and then attacked the Afghans, either in wanton disregard for the assurances given by M. de Giers to Lord Granville, or acting upon some secret understanding. If reliance can be placed in the reports of the Turkomans, the Russian troops afterwards retired across the Khushk. Colonel Alikhanoff entered the deserted Afghan camp, sent for the Saruk headmen, informed them that they must now look to him for orders, and directed them to select from among their number a chief who would be responsible to him for the maintenance of order. This, it is said, the Saruks of Panjdeh refused to do, asserting that they were British subjects, and meant to remain so. These, of course, are the reports brought in here, and not by any means reliable. Still, viewed with the evidences I have brought forward above of the disaffection of the Tekkes and Yulatan Saruks towards the Czar, and the keenness of the Saruks to attack the Russians, they are not unworthy of credence. It

is also reported that Alikhanoff has left Panjdeh, and th Komaroff has not returned thither from Merv, as he sa he would.[1] Notwithstanding the rickety condition of th Mashhad-Teheran wire, which has been much shattered by late storms, the news of the Panjdeh engagement has been transmitted to London. No one knows what the future of the Commission may be. The Governor of Herat and Kazi Saad-ud-din are encamped on the right bank of the river (we are on the left) near the bridge. Mr Herbert from Mashhad and Mr Finn from Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam arrived last night, and Captain Talbot this morning. Amid the stirring incidents of the past month and more, there has been little leisure to deal with the movements of survey and other parties. However, if we are to spend some time here in inaction, as seems possible, there will be ample leisure for that. After three weeks of almost incessant rain, we are now luxuriating in a spell of genial sunshine. It is neither hot nor cold, but a perfect happy medium. Mr Merk is about to start for a trip along the Perso-Afghan frontier, and I purpose to pay a rapid visit to Mashhad.

[1] Shortly after the fight at Panjdeh, General Komaroff appears to have withdrawn his troops to Kizil-tapa, leaving only an outpost at Ak-tapa. Ewaz Khan, a Saruk of Yulatan, was appointed Russian agent or governor in Panjdeh.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO MASHHAD.

MASHHAD, 22d *April*.

SOME ten days ago Mr Herbert and Mr Finn joined our camp at Tirpul. The former has for the past six weeks been at Mashhad acting as secretary to Mr Condie Stephen. The latter resides at Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, some 60 miles north-west of Kuhsan, and holds temporarily Colonel Stewart's former appointment. As Mr Herbert was about to return to Mashhad, carrying the despatches that Mr Condie Stephen is to bear to London (he started this morning from Mashhad for Astrabad), and as there seemed little prospect of the occurrence of any event of importance for some time, I determined to accompany him. After several days' fine weather, we fortunately found the roads and rivers in a condition much more conducive to easy travelling than that which Mr Herbert had experienced on his journey from Mashhad. The rivers were then abnormally swollen, and fordable with difficulty, and the roads knee-deep in mud. Indeed, between Kafir-Kalah and Karez on the 18th instant, on which day we left Tirpul, the roads were still in places mere broad running streams, and the soil a great quagmire, in which our horses frequently sank above their hocks, and could not extricate themselves until the rider dismounted. At Karez we found all the people living in one of Shah Abbas's old brick caravanserais. Their houses, they said, were all in ruins. In fact it is impossible to estimate the immense amount of damage that has been done in Khorasan and around Herat by the abnormally

severe weather that prevailed from the 20th March to th
8th April. In Mashhad the falling walls rendered it danger
ous to walk in the streets. In the orchards the blossom o
the apricot-trees was blasted by the bitter cold. The other
fruit-trees, blossoming later, have escaped. All the verdure
and vegetation have this year been much retarded by this
untimely demonstration of winter's power. However, it does
not appear that it anywhere caused any such loss of life as
attended the disastrous march of the Commission across the
Au-safid Pass on the 4th instant. On the 18th we slept at
Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, on the 19th at Faraiman, and reached
Mashhad at mid-day on the 20th. The stages were roughly
as follows:—

	Miles.
Tirpul to Karez, ...	27
Karez to Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, ...	35
Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam to Khairabad, ...	28
Khairabad to Faraiman, ...	32
Faraiman to Mashhad, ...	46
Total, ...	168

The road traverses a broad valley, in most places cultivable,
but in few places cultivated. On either side—*i.e.*, north and
south—it is bounded by high ranges of hills still capped with
the snow that fell a fortnight ago. Many are the streams and
rivulets crossed, now full of water from the melting snows, but
oon to become dry. Every 10 or 12 miles one of the fine old
rick caravanserais built by Shah Abbas is passed. Now their
oofs are fallen in, their walls are fissured and tottering, and
eir chambers choked with *débris*. The many capacious domed
nks are in a like ruinous state. Occasionally one passes a
lage whose orchards, gardens, and cultivated fields relieve the
eral air of desertion that pervades the country. Here and
re stand loopholed towers, relics of the now bygone era of
koman depredation. At Faraiman we visited the Sarang
onel), who was good enough to house us for the night and
ide me with horses for the journey to Mashhad. He was
ently a Russophile. For Alikhanoff he professed the
est admiration, while he maintained that the Indian

native troops were no good at all. I then asked him if he had no recollection of the taking of Bushire and the battle of Khushab. He maintained that the victory gained there was solely due to the English superiority in artillery. No doubt his estimate of Indian native troops is to be attributed solely to the successes of Ayub Khan at Maiwand and Kandahar in 1880. Although Ayub is in Teheran, and has been recently confined to the citadel there under strict surveillance, yet his partisans abound in Mashhad. He was arrested on the 12th instant, the alleged cause being that the Russian Legation has of late been strenuously interceding for his liberation from all surveillance or constraint.

The tone of the Sarang's conversation throughout evinced his contempt for British policy and power, his disbelief in the sincerity of the Amir's friendship towards England, and his regard for Russia as the coming race. That such should be the feeling prevalent throughout Khorasan and Afghanistan at this moment is a natural consequence of recent events here.

23d April.

I am staying here with Mr Gray, the telegraph superintendent, to whom is mainly, if not entirely, due the satisfactory manner in which telegraphic communication between London and Mashhad has of late been conducted. The line from Mashhad to Teheran is in the hands of a Persian official rejoicing in the grandiloquent title of "Mukhbir-ud-daulah," or "Newsmonger of the State." It is a single line, and breaks down on an average once a-week. The Persian telegraph clerks at the intermediate stations between Teheran and Mashhad are much given to devoting the daytime to sleep, or going out to amuse themselves at their own sweet will. At Shahrud is the junction of the Teheran-Astrabad and Teheran-Mashhad line. The line to Teheran being single, it has to be alternately connected with the Mashhad and Astrabad lines. When the work with the Astrabad line is completed, the clerk at times wilfully or neglectfully fails to re-connect the Teheran with the Mashhad line, and retires to snooze or amuse himself. It is in vain then to call from Mashhad to

Teheran, or *vice versâ*. The delinquent may be repriman
but he can always fall back on the plea that the lightn
was on the line, and he was therefore obliged to go to ear
or he may assert that the line was broken down near
station. Such are some of the difficulties to be contend
with. Yesterday we heard that the Karachi-Bushire cab
had gone, and would not be in working order for a week. I
the Persian Office here, there are four telegraph clerks, who
all put together, do perhaps half as much work as one
Englishman would do. Two of them have royal blood in their
veins, one being descended from Nadir Shah, and the other
from Fath Ali Shah, and all four are colonels in the Persian
army. But where their regiments may be, no one knows, nor
does their rank carry any pay with it. To-morrow evening
I purpose accompanying Mr Herbert to visit the Governor of
Khorasan, Asaf-ud-daulah.

This morning, returning from a ride towards the hills to the south of the city, I entered by the citadel gate, and passed close to the Governor's palace and gardens. Near it is the *Maidan-i-top*, or Artillery Place, in which the military reviews take place. In the citadel I took a brief look at the barracks of an infantry regiment. The barracks were good, but the men contemptible. One or two were toothless old men. The fact is, the Persian soldier enlists for life, and only resigns his general number, if he has one, on the very verge of the grave. From the infantry barracks I passed into an arsenal. I saw an exceedingly neatly kept garden, but not much in the way of munitions of war. Thence I wended my way into the artillery workshops. It struck me that the workshops themselves would have to be rebuilt and refitted before they could be expected to turn out or repair a gun-carriage or a waggon. There is nothing striking in Mashhad, except the mosque of Imam Reza, with its gilded lome and twin gilded minarets, flanked by a blue-tiled dome rith twin blue-tiled minarets. The rest of the town, as viewed om a distance, is but a mass of mud-walls and budding ees, in the midst of which the gilded dome glimm
rror of a heliograph. A consi

to use the Persian term, *bast*—*i.e.*, a religious sanctuary, within the limits of which no Mohammedan criminal who has therein sought refuge can be arrested. This *bast* comprises the precincts of the mosque itself, and that part of the city that immediately adjoins it. If any Jew, Christian, or Armenian be found within the limits of the *bast* it is highly probable that he would not leave that sanctuary alive. Recently all the Jews here have been obliged to become outwardly Mohammedans, and are known as *jadid*[1] (new—*i.e.*, newly converted). Yesterday, probably for the first time, there were six European Christians within the walls of Mashhad. Any Christian residing here must walk circumspectly, otherwise he may bring down upon his offending head the vials of Mohammedan wrath. The main street here is called Khiyaban. It is a fairly good and broad thoroughfare, lined with shops, houses, and gardens. In its centre grow two rows of very fine *chinar*-trees. In it is situated the telegraph office. The mosque of Imam Reza is in the south-east quarter. The remaining streets are all mere dirty, narrow, roughly paved thoroughfares lined with high mud or brick walls. One old wall is noticeable for its great breadth, and the strength and solidity of its build. It is now rather dilapidated; but in former times, when the top was still level and undevoured by the elements, an aqueduct constructed along it carried water to the mosque. To the west of the city stretch gardens and orchards as far as the eye can reach. To the east there are few or none. To the south and north the lofty distant mountain-ranges are capped with vast masses of snow.

I was surprised to find in Khorasan traces of the proselytising efforts of the Mahdi, or as the Persians invariably style him, the *muta Mahdi* (false Prophet). The Mahdi's name is generally associated exclusively with the Soudan. And yet, at the little town of Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, half-way between Herat and Mashhad, I was informed that one of his proclamations, calling on all true believers to join his standard, had been received by the Kazi there. The proclamation was written in Arabic on large gilt paper, and was

[1] The name in full is Jadid-ul-Islam.

worded something as follows: "I, Muhammad the so[n of] Ahmed, to all ye who believe in the law of the Prop[het,] give notice that I am only waging a *jehád* [holy war] [for] the sake of God, and against his enemies. Let every [one] who does not believe my words and acts, come and [see] with his own eyes; or do you select some of your o[wn] learned men, and let them come and converse with m[e.] Furthermore, if any man having seen this proclamatio[n] fails to act in accordance with it, he shall be despise[d] and accursed both in this world and the next. But i[f] he believes and straightway comes to aid me, he shall have rest and peace in this world and perfect happiness in the next." The copy of this proclamation came from Irak and Fars to Birjand, Kaïn, and Khaf, and finally to Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, whence it was sent on to Herat. It never excited any feeling but one of contempt among the Persian Mullas and men of education, and certainly had no influence on the uneducated classes.

24th April.

This evening I visit the Governor, and then dine with Mirza Abbas Khan, the British agent here. The latter is a very agreeable and apparently a very able man. The Commission has done very much to tone down the fanatical aversion of the people of Mashhad for the intrusion of Christians or idolaters into their "holy" city. Major the Honourable G. Napier was one of the first to enter Mashhad, and he was fain to take his constitutionals in his courtyard or on the roof of the house. He was followed by a Mr Schindler, who laid down the telegraph line. Then came Mr Condie Stephen some two years ago. When the Commission arrived here seven months ago they were not allowed within the city. Mr Simpson, I believe, went to the house of Mirza Abbas Khan, and thence sketched the mosque of Imam Reza. Mr Gray was given [a] house near the telegraph office in the Khiyaban. Then [c]ame Mr Schwabe, the agent of Ziegler & Co., and he [w]as followed in February last by Mr Condie Stephen [and M]r Herbert. So the ice has been ...

can walk anywhere about Mashhad, except in the *bast*, without evoking any display of fanaticism. Some of these days a Russian force will come this way, and then both fanaticism and the *bast* will disappear at one fell swoop.

MASHHAD, *20th April.*

The Commission is passively encamped at Tirpul, waiting until the Government may be pleased to deliver it from an exceedingly unpleasant position. From the day when Sir Peter Lumsden first reached Sarakhs, and Alikhanoff, with a *sotnia* of Cossacks at his heels, galloped through the British camp, to the hour when Komaroff, elated by the ruthless massacre of a weak force of half-disciplined, half-armed Afghans, sent a son of Saruk Khan, chief of the Yulatan Saruks, to bear to Captain Yate as a present the boots of one of the Afghan generals—from first to last the Commission has had an irksome and unenviable part to play. At this moment the prestige of England stands lower in Central Asia than ever in the annals of history. Persians, Afghans, and Turkomans have almost ceased to look towards British aid as a possible bar to Russian encroachment. Converse with whom one may, there is but one thought underlying every word. In short, the course of events here during the past six months has invested the name of Russia with additional lustre, and so dimmed the brightness of British prestige that only some signal and successful effort can restore it to its pristine state. This being the case, it is little wonder that the position of the Commission at this present moment should be both highly unsatisfactory and galling to its members, and discreditable to the nation it represents. It is no longer the honoured guest of the Amir. On the contrary, ever since the defeat sustained at Panjdeh, the dissatisfaction of the Afghans has been hidden under but a flimsy veil of outward complaisance. When on April 4 the Chief Commissioner and his party, escorted by the 11th Bengal Lancers, encountered that terrible storm in crossing the Ardewán Pass over the Paropamisus, where twenty-four camp-followers perished of

cold, and the baggage was scattered broadcast over the surrounding country, what aid did the Afghans give? They made a show of sending out parties to aid in collecting the stragglers and baggage, but they brought in next to nothing; and when the inhabitants of the neighbourhood swarmed to the spot, like vultures to a carcass, and rifled both baggage and dead bodies, they showed themselves neither able to protect nor quick to punish. All that was done was due to the energetic efforts of two or three officers, aided by a party of the 11th Bengal Lancers. Later on these were joined by two more officers of the escort and 50 men of the 20th Panjab Infantry. To these alone is it due that the results of this disaster were not more serious. Such lukewarmness on the part of the Afghan authorities subsequently developed itself into a mild system of boycotting. For some days no supplies whatever came into camp, although the towns and agricultural districts of Kuhsan and Ghorian were hard by, and the immense resources of the Herat valley within four days' march. At the same time the Indian mail ceased to arrive. A plea for this was found in the flooded condition of the Farah and Khushk rivers, with what degree of truth cannot be ascertained. There is, however, no doubt that at this time there were abnormal floods, and the roads were very heavy. At last, on April 22, eight days' mails arrived at once, of dates from March 22 to April 1, from Calcutta, Allahabad, and Lahore. Now it is known that these mails can be, and have been, conveyed from the above-named cities to the Commission near Herat in fifteen or sixteen days, instead of from twenty-one to thirty-one days. How far this interruption in the postal service was due to the Amir's absence in India is problematical; as also the influence thereon of the Amir's return. The Afghans make no secret of their opinion that the Commission should have accorded them some assistance more substantial than mere moral support. It is in vain to argue that the Commission is a peaceful body. An Afghan does not understand

such delicate distinctions. He believes that men can fight *if* they wish. Nor are the grave reports of language unfavourable to England used by high officials in Herat to be disregarded. Of the Naib Salar, who commanded at Panjdeh, the following remark made to the Governor of Herat is reported: "I am glad that we fought the Russians at Panjdeh, for now we know who are our friends and who our foes. Those at least who bade us fight and left us to be annihilated, who gave us advice and not arms, are not our real friends." What, then, will be the feeling of these, our allies, when they know that the British Government has urged them to shed their blood for territory that it now seems disposed to yield to Russian braggadocio?

While the Afghans, then, are disappointed by recent events, how have the Turkomans and the Chahar Aimak tribes been moved by the palpable proofs of Russian power and British impotence that they have just witnessed? The Turkomans *to a man hate* Russian rule, *and* but a *month ago* the Saruks of Panjdeh were ready, ay, and offered to rise and attack the Russian force encamped before the Afghan position at Pul-i-khishti. At the same time the Saruks of Yulatan assured their brethren of Panjdeh that they longed for nothing more than a Russian defeat, and that they personally would not fire one shot on the Russian side. The Tekkes, *though sworn foes of the Saruks, none the less detest* Russian rule. There is no reason to doubt that the genuine hatred of the Russian that characterises the Turkoman and the Persian is shared by the Chahar Aimak. Indeed the cordiality and friendliness that these displayed to the Commission on its first arrival in their country is sufficient evidence of their goodwill to the Briton. Moreover, one if not more of *these tribes are united by close ties with the Saruks* of Panjdeh. And now they have seen the British Commission, that came amongst them five months ago with offers of friendship and protection, ignominiously ousted by Russian violence. It was the men of these very tribes who then inquired how the Commission, with so small a body of troops, pro-

posed to resist the Russians if they thought fit to settle this frontier question by arms instead of diplomacy. Little we thought then how true was the forecast of those untutored Asiatics. It was not for a month or two after that—indeed not until Khartoum fell—that Russia openly showed her hand. Why was a Commission ever sent, if it was not to be supported loyally and manfully? From the very first this support was denied it. It is but the other day that the painful admission was drawn from Mr Gladstone that the demand for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Pul-i-Khatun had "virtually lapsed." This was indeed the first fatal *lapsus*, and all the subsequent evils are its fruits. Give an inch, and an ell is taken. So it has been with Badkis. It has gradually "lapsed" into Russian hands.

Since the early part of this century, when first the inhabitants of Central Asia began to realise the impending danger of Russian aggressiveness, England has been the Power to which they all looked for help. In the hopes and fears of these races she might have found a serviceable weapon to check Russian ambition. In the days of Sir John Malcolm and Sir Harford Jones, strenuous efforts were made to maintain the supremacy of British influence at the Court of the Shah; but later on, Persia was left to the tender mercies and forcible embraces of the Russian Bear. Forty odd years ago the missions of Abbott and Shakespeare, Stoddart and Conolly, to Khiva and Bokhara, had some political significance; but since then there has been little or no intercourse between England and the Central Asian khanates. In fact, the policy upon which the English Government decided appears to be this—that a certain zone of territory beyond the Indian frontier should be kept exclusively under British influence, while all beyond that zone should be left to Russia. There seems to be no ground for finding fault with the soundness of that policy, provided it had been opportunely and firmly enforced. But it has not been so enforced. The British Government has ever been "too late" and too undecided in its moves. In 1870, when the Clarendon-Gortchakoff agreement came on the *tapis*, it was "too late." Russia then steadfastly refused to recognise

any "neutral zone" north of the Oxus corresponding with Afghanistan to the south. So, finally, England had to content itself with a recognition from Russia that Afghanistan was entirely beyond the sphere of her (Russia's) influence. *But even then the fatal error was made of defining with heedless vagueness the northern frontier of Afghanistan.* Between the years 1869 and 1873 our relations with Amir Sher Ali Khan were on a fairly amicable footing, and a Government of foresight and discrimination should have then and there availed itself of that favourable opportunity for surveying and clearly demarcating that frontier. Had that been done, no Commission would have been necessary in 1884-85, and Russia and England would possibly not now be at daggers-drawn. Once the Russians had installed themselves at Merv, and drawn within their octopodian arms the Tekkes, the Salors, and part of the Saruks, they thereby established just the shadow of a specious claim to the suzerainty of all the Turkomans, and of all the territory inhabited or frequented by them. "Too late" again. The frontier should have been fixed before the Russians got to Merv. Doubtless the fanaticism and obstructiveness of the Afghan have been a source of difficulty; but the mistake made was *in not riding roughshod over such obstacles. The Amirs* have been too much petted, and then when they have proved false and obstreperous they have been chastised with great severity.

It was reported here a few days ago that Prince Dondukoff-Korsakoff was coming to Sarakhs; then it was said he would *not come beyond Ashkabad; and lastly, we hear that he never* crossed the Caspian. General Komaroff and Colonel Alikhanoff having returned from Panjdeh to Sarakhs, thence went to the Zulfikar Pass. Komaroff has sent to the Asaf-ud-daulah, Governor of Khorasan, two rifles, said to have been taken from the Afghans at Panjdeh. The one proves to be a Winchester rifle and the other a Snider. The object, no doubt, of sending them, is to persuade the Persians (who love the Russians only from fear) that the Afghans were all armed with breech-loaders, and that consequently the Russian victory was really a credit to Russian military skill and prowess.

These rifles, I now hear, were part of the present given to Turkoman chiefs in January last, all of which presents General Komaroff, actuated by a narrow-minded jealousy, confiscated after the occupation of Panjdeh, and subsequently, it seems, distributed among his friends. I paid a visit to the Governor two days ago, and I then took the opportunity of informing him that the Afghans, although they might possibly have had one or two good rifles, were almost exclusively armed with percussion muzzle-loaders, and that these—the troops having spent the night of 29th March in the trenches—were damp and missed fire. I also made a point of bringing to his notice the dastardly, ungenerous behaviour of the Russians towards Captain Yate and the other British officers there after the victory.

It is a bad omen that at the first *rencontre* between Russia and England in Asia the latter should look like going to the wall. Some consider that the British Commission should have remained in Panjdeh. It may be reasonably surmised that the Russians would not have dared to attack and occupy Panjdeh when under the ægis of the British Commission; and if they had done so, they would have had to calculate, not with a weak force of Afghans only, but with the open hostility of 3000 or 4000 Saruks of Panjdeh and the covert nmity of their own subject Tekkes and Saruks. However, s that place has now passed into Russian hands, we may ave it and fix our attention on Herat. It may be reasonably pprehended that, despite all efforts of the Amir to reassure s subjects, the fall of Herat before a Russian army would und them to the very core. What would be the result of capture of Herat, when the capture of Panjdeh has stirred Afghan breasts exceeding bitterness against the English? the event, therefore, of fresh difficulty with Russia, it ns almost certain that the Commission will withdraw into ia. Not that the feelings of the Persians are by any ns too friendly; but in the present instance there seems n to believe that the Shah would, in the event of war een England and Russia, preserve a strict neutrality, praying fervently the while for the defeat of the latter.

No Persian really loves the Russians, but the latter have persuaded the former that by keeping on good terms with them they will best consult their own interests. Hence the Russophilism now prevalent in Khorasan. The Russian authorities in Central Asia continually send presents to the Asaf-ud-daulah. This accounts for his discourtesy to the Commission in February last, in neglecting, if not declining, to collect supplies for its use at Zohrabad. It was not until he received peremptory orders from the Shah to aid the Commission in every possible way, that he saw fit to modify his obstructive attitude. At the same time, several Persian noblemen in Khorasan of reputed British sympathies were either removed from their appointments, or, to use the term commonly current in Persia, "squeezed"—*i.e.*, made to pay up a considerable sum of money. The presence of an Anglophile governor at New Sarakhs would obviously be highly inconvenient to the Russians.

A few days ago I met at the house of Mirza Abbas Khan, the British Agent here, Sardar Hashim Khan, son of Sardar Mohammed Sharif Khan, brother of the late Amir Sher Ali. When his father took refuge in India, after the revolt of Yakub Khan against the Amir, about 1872, Hashim Khan accompanied him. About 1877, however, the Amir having overcome his resentment towards his brother, sent for his—the brother's—children to Kabul. There Hashim Khan was treated with marked favour, and ultimately married the Amir's favourite daughter. In 1878 he shared Sher Ali's flight from Kabul to Turkistan; and it is said that the Amir died with his head upon his breast.[1] On the accession of Sardar Mohammed Yakub Khan, he returned to Kabul, and remained there until the conclusion of the arrangement that placed Sardar Abdur Rahman Khan on the throne. Then he withdrew to Persia, and attached himself to the fortunes of Sardar Mohammed Ayub Khan, who is now a prisoner, with Musa Jan, Yakub Khan's son, in Teheran. Sardar

[1] For a good account of Hashim Khan's conduct after Sher Ali's death, and the manner in which his claim to the throne was received by the Afghan people, see Yavorski's account of General Stolietoff's Mission to Kabul, 1878-79.

Hashim Khan (or, to give him his full name, Mohammed Hashim Khan) is some thirty-two years of age, of average height, rather portly, of somewhat independent and brusque manners, and possessed of average mental vigour and intelligence. Although nominally an adherent of Ayub Khan, there is little doubt that he aims at attaining the throne of Kabul himself. Not unnaturally he is somewhat embittered against the reigning Amir, and the Government that selected him as ruler of Afghanistan. But at the same time he admitted him to be a ruler possessed of both military and administrative talents. The features in his management of Afghan affairs which he deemed worthy of censure were in the main those that I have heard censured very severely by the best-informed Persian authorities here—viz., the indiscriminating severity with which he has removed, whether by the sword and the cord, or by exile, every individual of rank or influence whose fidelity he suspected, replacing them by creatures of his own, who are invariably, if men of rank and family, incapable and void of intellect, and, if possessed of ability, of low origin, and exercising no influence in right of birth. With such subordinates, it is argued, the Amir cannot possibly unite around his own person the sympathies and attachment of the diverse elements of Afghan nationality. No Amir, in fact, since Dost Mohammed Khan, has succeeded in doing so. Hence, although at the present moment Abdur Rahman Khan makes his power felt and his orders obeyed in the remotest corners of his kingdom, the military resources of the nation would never rally round him in the event of a serious danger threatening from without—as, for instance, a Russian invasion. That one should frequently hear in Mashhad openly expressed doubts of Abdur Rahman's fidelity to England is only to be expected. However, one remark made by Sardar Hashim Khan struck me forcibly, because it had the air of a prophecy; and I had reason to believe, from information received, that it was not far removed from the truth. He said, "I will tell you what the Amir will say at the conference with the Viceroy of India. He will decline the aid of British troops if they are

offered to him; but he will ask for money, rifles, and guns." I may as well add that the Sardar did not hesitate to insinuate that the money and arms would all be promptly despatched towards Samarcand; and that when the Amir found he could get no more, he would declare himself openly as a friend of Russia. This, however, is a statement that must be received with very great caution. Albeit Abdur Rahman Khan spent thirteen years in Russian Turkistan, any charge of Russophilism against him seems to be baseless. There is no doubt that he is very reluctant to admit British troops into his territory, and that he makes use of the traditional fanaticism of the Afghan people as an argument against a British occupation of any portion of his dominions. That such a statement is aught but a diplomatic falsehood no one now will believe. Since the Commission left India, the public has had ample means of gauging the depths of Afghan hate. Here it is invariably maintained, alike by Afghan and Persian, that the people of Herat and Kandahar would, from fear of Russia, welcome a British occupation, if not annexation. The Kabulis, on the contrary, are opposed thereto. Sardar Hashim Khan expressed the self-same views; but it is extremely doubtful if he would repeat them from the throne of Kabul. The fact is, that the Amirs have always felt that their power and importance would suffer a serious diminution as soon as the rivalry of England and Russia in Central Asia came to a decisive issue. They know their own value as a bulwark against Russian aggression towards India, and they desire to sustain that value as long as possible. Consequently, while they consider that the acceptance of British gold and arms in no way detracts from their importance—nay, indeed, since it may be represented in the light of tribute and not a subsidy, rather enhances it—on the other hand, they know that the defence of Afghan territory by British troops against a Russian invasion would strike a fatal blow at their independence. They could no longer pose as the allies, but only as the *protégés* of Great Britain. The same motives have urged them ever to oppose the establishment of British agencies or residencies in the capital and other large cities of

Afghanistan. They regarded it as but the thin edge of t wedge; but their allegations of Afghan fanaticism have, as rule, been gross exaggerations—and where, as in the case Cavagnari, a British Resident has seemingly fallen a victin to that fanaticism, the outrage has really had its origin in the false impressions and apprehensions to which the Amirs have given currency, and by which they have made an outward display of regulating their conduct. Sardar Hashim Khan attributed Cavagnari's murder solely to the jealousy with which Yakub Khan prevented him from associating either with the Afghan chiefs or the people. "Do you think," said Hashim Khan, "that if he had gone abroad among the people, and had had open dealings with them, whether social or commercial, they would not have learnt to appreciate his good qualities; and if he had been permitted to exchange social courtesies with the Afghan chiefs and nobles, to entertain and be entertained by them, that a mutual friendship would not have sprung up? What the Amir did was to cut him off entirely from everybody, and to receive him only in strict privacy and in the presence of two or three of his confidants. Consequently, when an outbreak of popular feeling took place, Cavagnari was of necessity sacrificed." Such is the opinion of an Afghan of high rank present in Kabul during the massacre of Cavagnari and his comrades. But what struck me as of especial moment in the present crisis was Hashim Khan's vehement insistence that the Afghan blood shed at Panjdeh by English instigation must be avenged by England. Otherwise, he said, let England never again look to the Afghans to fight her battles. And yet, when this is the state of excited Afghan feeling (an yewitness told me that when the news of the Panjdeh defeat as reported to the Afghan community here many of them ed silent tears over it), one sees proposals current that the ry land they fought for should be ceded to Russia. It is possible to read or think of such proposals with calmness. the event of a war, it is important to us not only that the hans should be our allies, but that the Persians should be, ot our allies, at least neutral. It is a matter of vital im-

portance to Russia to be able to draw supplies from Khorasan for her forces operating in trans-Caspiana. It should therefore be the endeavour of the British Government to prevent that. Reliable authorities here say that "Persia will sit neutral with folded hands, and pray God that Russia may be defeated." However, there is no reason to suppose that the Shah, if he received sufficient guarantees of future support from England, would not stand forth as her active ally. With him it is a choice between hope from England and dread of Russia. It might restore affairs to see a British force occupying Kandahar by the orders of a British Ministry. This seems a step sadly needed both for the safety of India and the due control and reformation of Afghanistan. From Kandahar a salutary influence and judicious control might well be established on the arbitrary exercise of power of the Amirs, on the turbulence of the tribal chiefs, and on the uncivilised condition of the populace. It is quite time that this control, similar to that exercised among the feudatory princes of India, should be established in Afghanistan. An independent is inconsistent with a subsidised Afghanistan. A judiciously exercised British control would tend both to remove Afghan prejudices against foreign intrusion, to cultivate and civilise the people, and to improve generally the condition of the country. It is but right that England should exercise the same paramount influence in Afghanistan that Russia does over Bokhara.

I purpose in a day or two to return to the camp at Tirpul. I have had a very pleasant and interesting visit here. Not that there is anything very striking in the place itself, although the fact that it has been seldom visited by Europeans, and that until recently such visitors have either not been allowed to enter the city at all, or have been obliged to avoid frequenting the public thoroughfares, invests it with a certain halo of mystery and novelty. Taking a bird's-eye view of the city, one sees nothing but mud-walls and trees, with perhaps a tall *badgir* (wind-tower) standing out conspicuously here and there. These *badgirs* are a great godsend in the summer. Some days ago I was taking a look at a handsome mansion (in the garden opposite the telegraph office) which

was being prepared for the reception of the Commander-in-Chief here. I found that the wind from the *badgirs* was carried down into cellars below the ground-floor, and then disseminated through the house by gratings in the floor of each room and passage. The advantage of this arrangement is, that the air, which when it enters the *badgir* is in summer warm, becomes cooled in its passage through the cellars, and is distributed cool through the house. One of the most admirable arrangements in a Persian house is the central tank. This is generally situated in a lofty dark chamber, and is often five or six feet below the level of the surrounding rooms. Its floor is of cool stone, or in the houses of the wealthy and noble of white marble. Around this in the hot weather the sybaritic Persian sits (when he does not feel disposed for the society of the inmates of his *andarun*—*Anglicè*, harem), drinks wine, arrack, or sherbet, tea or coffee, as the spirit moveth him, and smokes the ever-circling *kalian*.

Mashhad is full of temptations to spend money. In the first place, association with any of the great men of the place is an expensive luxury. When Mr Condie Stephen was here, the Governor used to send him once or twice a-week a trifling present, such as fruit, vegetables, sweetmeats, a lamb or a duck. For each of these attentions a *douceur* of £1 was paid to the servants of the Governor. When Mr Herbert paid his farewell visit to the Governor, I accompanied him. On our return, we were escorted home by a half-a-dozen of *farrashes*, who received a parting tip of £2. They had the insolence to say that it was not sufficient. So much for Persian gratitude. I am thankful to say that as a humble subaltern, and one residing here in no official capacity, I have been able to escape these irregular sources of expenditure. However, I have been let in for an accidental one that promises to cost me a pretty penny. It may be remembered that I mentioned that a *chuprassi* in my service robbed me at Kuhsan of property to the value of about Rs. 600. I always suspected he had gone to Mashhad. A few days ago a revolver was brought to me, with a request from Mirza Abbas Khan, the British Agent, that I would let him know the value of it. I looked at it,

named its worth—it was one of Webley's latest and best—but never dreamed for a moment it was the very revolver that had been stolen from me at Kuhsan. Two days ago a private servant, who had come from Tirpul on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Reza, came to me and said he had just seen, *outside the limits of "bast,"* the man who had robbed me at Kuhsan. Had he been in *bast*, no one could have touched him. I at once went off to the British Agent, and sent three of his men with the informer to seize the thief. Within half an hour I had the satisfaction of seeing him in custody. Albeit he has since then persistently averred that he has disposed of all the property he stole, my revolver, with pouch and belt, were found in his dwelling, and my watch in a shopkeeper's abode. The latter I had to repurchase, and by the time I have remunerated everybody who has had a finger in this pie, I shall probably be fervently wishing I had never caught the delinquent. However, *Inshallah*, he will have his toes tickled *à la Perse*. Indeed the merciless minions of the Karguzar suggested the curtailment of one of his ears this morning. But I deprecated mutilation. I was desirous of taking the man to camp and there dealing with him either as a British or Afghan subject. However, I was informed that his removal from Persian territory might be resented by the Persian officials, and being reported to Teheran, be made a subject of complaint, and so cause some unpleasantness. I shall therefore leave him in the hands of Mirza Abbas Khan, who promises to see that he gets his due.

A third and purely voluntary source of getting rid of spare cash is the treasures of the bazaar. They are of endless number and variety, and uncommonly seductive. Let us divide them into two classes, hard and soft. Under the first we may class damascened swords, daggers (*khanjar* or *pishkabz*) and knives, coats of chain-mail and steel helmets, and a great variety of utensils carved from a sort of soapstone, and what is much more valuable, from a pink-hued alabaster. Of old pottery and tiles (*kashi*) I have seen nothing here worth buying, and not one specimen of that old glass with the *reflet métallique* which fetches such high

prices in the European market. The fact is, it has aln all been bought up by Messrs Ziegler & Co., and ot firms in Persia, not to mention private purchasers, w supply the great marts of Europe with these articles *vertu*. It is much the same with *kashi*. Only in out-of-th way places may specimens now be picked up by the chanc traveller. Some good MS. copies of the Persian classics ma be obtained here at moderate prices. The introduction of printing into the East has materially lessened the value of MSS. For two or three guineas, a year's labour of some accomplished scribe can be bought. Under the head of soft fabrics come the manufactures of the Tekke and Saruk Turkomans (which are much cheaper here than at Panjdeh or Bala Murghab), the carpets of Kaïn, Mashhad, and Birjand, the silk embroideries of Bokhara, the silks and shawls of Bokhara or local manufacture, and a score of other things. As, however, aniline dyes are now largely used in Persia (it is only a year or two ago that I read in a Persian weekly that the Shah had forbidden the use of aniline dyes under pain of severe penalty), the carpets now made there cannot compare with the older class of article. Some of the old Kaïn carpets are of beautiful patterns and texture. However, at the present moment, when one has collected a quantity of the articles specified above, it becomes a matter for grave consideration how to get them to England or India. With war impending with Russia, it is scarcely advisable to augment *impedimenta*.

One of not the least interesting features of a visit at this juncture to Mashhad is the opportunity it offers for learning the opinions of well-informed Persians and Afghans of high position on the Central Asian question. It is, of course, not to be supposed that they would give expression without reserve to their real views; but at the same time, it may not without reason be presumed that they are not entirely false. The present Governor of Khorasan has the reputation of being most amicably disposed towards Russia. Indeed his unfriendly attitude towards the British Commission in February last, when reported to Teheran, drew down upon him the censure of the Shah. Naturally his Russian predilections

are not paraded before an Englishman. He was formerly Karguzar (the official in each province with whom the agents of foreign Powers transact their business) at Tabriz, and then Governor of Resht. The Russians seemingly maintain intimate relations with him. They now keep up a native agent at Mashhad, by name Mirza Karim Khan, on a reputed (his own statement, I believe—*ergo* divide by four) salary of £800 per annum. The British Agent gets, it is said, about £450 a-year. The Russian emissary who brought the rifles from Panjdeh is one Yahya Beg, and is said to be engaged in purchasing supplies in Khorasan for the Russian troops in the trans-Caspian territory.[1] It is scarcely to be hoped that the Shah will have the courage to declare himself at the outset actively hostile to Russia. He fears too much the after-consequences of her resentment, if victorious. Like a true Oriental, he will probably await the progress of events; and then, if he sees his way to profiting thereby, unite his fortunes to those of the apparently winning side. Whether England can or will hold forth to him inducements sufficient to secure his co-operation against Russia, is a point for the Ministry to decide. Rotten as Persia is to the very core, and void as the Persian army is of organisation, and even of courage, she might still become an unpleasant thorn in the Russian side. Her hostility would necessitate the maintenance of a Russian force on the frontiers of Azerbaijan, and the strengthening of the line of communications in trans-Caspiana, supposing always that Russia elected or was able to make Herat one of the theatres of war. At all events, the hostility of Persia would detain a large body of Russian troops on her northern frontier, and effectually prevent their operating actively elsewhere. It is just possible that the presence of a powerful British army at Herat might turn the scale of the Shah's wavering mind in favour of a British alliance. With a victorious British army it is more than probable he would evince cordial sympathy, and sympathy would doubtless develop into co-operation. It would appear, however, that the despatch of an army to Herat is not at present part of the English plan of campaign. Still an

[1] I saw him at Kuhsan in July.

Turkish army in Armenia would be no less persuasive. Wha
he would fear, if he sided against Russia, is, that he would fin
the Cossacks in Teheran before British aid could arrive. With
his capital secured, and possessed of satisfactory guarantees o
future protection, he would doubtless consider it conducive to
his own advantage to become the active ally of England.

That the Russians are but biding their time to encroach
farther on the northern frontier of Persia, there is little
doubt. That they have fixed their covetous eye on Kalat-
i-Nadiri is well known. The entire water-supply of the
Atak is at present in the control of the Kurdish and Turkish
tribes dwelling in the mountainous tract from Daragez to
Kalat-i-Nadiri. The Russians are bound in self-interest to
lose no time in getting the sources of this water-supply into
their own hands.

1st May.

I start for Tirpul to-morrow. I have confined my walks
and rides since I arrived very much to the southern side of
the city, and consequently know little of the other quarters.
It is unpleasant frequenting the more crowded parts and
the bazaars unless attended by an imposing retinue. Al-
though the Governor is reported to have recently boasted
that the walls of Mashhad would hold in check a Russian
army, I may as well remark that weaker defences I never set
eyes on. Instead of the massive thickness of the defences of
Herat and Kandahar, there is nothing but a weak structure of
mud some 20 feet high. The citadel is on the south side of
the city, and is no citadel at all. The Governor's palace,
which is of considerable extent, adjoins it. East of the
citadel gate is the Idgah gate, and west the Sarab and Bala-
Khiyaban gates. Entering by the latter, which faces west-
ward, one traverses the Khiyaban or main street of Mashhad,
which runs east to the precincts of the mosque of Imam
Reza, and past that to the eastern gate of the city. It is a
ne wide street, with a broad canal full of running water
the centre, both sides of which are lined with fine *chinars*,
plars, mulberries, willows, &c. Of the bazaars I saw little
nothing, as they are mostly within the limits of *bast*.

Of the buildings and innumerable by-streets nothing need be said, except in execration of the corn-teasing cobbles, or rather boulders, with which they are paved. Occasionally one gets a glimpse of a garden, refreshing with its budding and blooming trees and shrubs. The great mosque of course I have only seen at a distance. The decorations of the interior are described as very fine, and the thronging crowds of devotees within the precincts of the mosque as a marvellous sight. I paid a farewell visit to the Asaf-ud-daulah yesterday. He was very affable and confidential, and gave me in mysterious tones a history of Russian progress in Central Asia. I could have administered to him a still more edifying lecture. His information, he added, was obtained from a Russian book which had been translated into Persian by the Shah's orders, and with a copy of which the Shah had presented him. His palace is entered by a broad gateway passing under the quarters occupied by the officer of the guard. The arms of the guard are piled in front of the gateway, under the eye of the sentry. Between the bayonets of the piled arms are laid the colours, or rather colour (I saw only one), of the regiment. Hard by the palace is Artillery Square. On the north side of it are a number of gun-sheds (a dozen or more), each said to hold two or three guns. In front stand two antique brass muzzle-loaders. Hard by, new artillery barracks are being constructed.

A few nights ago one of the Persian telegraph officials here entertained us at dinner. He is a descendant of Fath Ali Shah, a colonel in the Persian service, and enjoys a salary of 48 rupees (12 *tomans*) a-month. But none the less he lives like a prince, as he is. He has many silver-headed *kalians*, spoons of silver filigree-work, and a beautifully inlaid backgammon-board over which he loses a sovereign in five minutes with the utmost calmness, which I could not help admiring. He played with another prince, Daud Mirza, scion of the house of Nadir Shah, and though he lost heavily, remained quite unruffled. The game is played almost exactly as we play it. A stake of half-a-*toman* (two rupees) was commenced with; and then, as each player thought his

chances of success improving, he staked an extra *karan* or two, so that frequently in an exciting game the stakes amount to from two to three *tomans*. Before we retired our host had lost seven *tomans*, or more than half his month's salary. The winner became very lively (he drank freely of raw arrack), and invoked repeatedly the name of her Majesty the Queen and the British Government, and as freely cursed the Russians. The Persians do not actually dine till a late hour of the evening, 10 or 11 P.M.; the earlier hours they while away with tea, wine, arrack, and light refreshments, such as bread and cheese, sweetmeats, pickles, lettuce, spring onions, &c. The *kalian* and cigarettes are smoked, and probably chess or backgammon played. Finally, they squat down to the serious meal, and having partaken freely of that, retire to rest. Persian cookery is worthy of all praise. I have tasted some excellent dishes since I came here. *Faisanjan* is a delicious dish, consisting of chicken or mutton, with a sauce of walnuts and pomegranate-juice. *Khurisht-i-alu* is meat cooked with dried plums. Persian meat is *always* tender. Can we say that for our British cookery? We might learn much from the Persian *cuisine*. Some of the Persian sweetmeats are delicious. The Asaf-ud-daulah has just sent me a trayful. It is an honour doubtless, but I had hoped to have been spared that honour. It is too dear at the price. Opinions about the Asaf-ud-daulah differ. His long residence at Resht and Tabriz has brought him much in contact with Russians, and hence his opinions about them should carry some weight. Of his ability, I think there is no doubt; but, unless report much maligns him, he is a tyrant of the deepest dye.

CHAPTER XI.

INACTION AND UNCERTAINTY.

TIRPUL, 10*th May.*

THE third, and I believe—we all hope—the last phase of the Commission has commenced. The first phase was the march from India to Herat, the signal success attending which seemed to augur well for the future. The second phase, while, to say the least, adding nothing to the reputation of the Gladstonian Ministry, has shed additional lustre on the Commission itself. Europe has seen a handful of British officers, receiving from their Government a wavering support more embarrassing than no support at all, resolutely and steadfastly opposing, at times at the risk of their lives, a strong Russian force backed by the whole strength of its Government and the influence of a powerful military party. Under such circumstances the Commission, albeit unsuccessful, will retire from the scene of its labours strong in the conviction that it has manfully done its duty to its country. If an explanation of the true causes of its non-success be required, let it be sought at the hands of those who still, *mirabile dictu*, control the destinies of the British empire.

The order from the Home Government directing Sir Peter Lumsden, Colonel Stewart, and Captain Barrow to return to England without delay, reached Tirpul on the morning of the 8th. Colonel Stewart being absent—he left on the 4th with Major Holdich and Captain Peacocke for the neighbourhood of Herat—had to be recalled, and is expected here in a day

or two. The Commissioner and his private secretary started for England at daybreak on the 9th. The previous evening they dined with us at the Big Mess, and the cordial manner in which Colonel Ridgeway's proposal of General Lumsden's health and safe journey was received by all, proved that while amongst us he had secured the sympathy and goodwill of all. In his reply the General struck a sympathetic chord in the hearts of all his listeners when he said, "I trust to God we have all done our duty to our country." It is a great solace to any man to feel that, despite governmental stumbling-blocks, he has walked straight in the path of duty to his country.

On the 6th of February, Colonel Ridgeway left Bala Murghab. On the 8th or 9th, when nearing Panjdeh, he heard that the Russians had driven in the Afghan outpost at Aimakar. He hastened on to Panjdeh, reporting at the same time to General Lumsden. After some correspondence, it was decided that Colonel Ridgeway should place himself in communication with the Russians, and endeavour to fix a limit beyond which neither Afghan nor Russian should pass. With this view he addressed a letter to the Russian officer in command on the line from Merv to Hazrat Imam, and on the evening of the 12th February started from Panjdeh down the Murghab. Advancing as far as Sanduk Kushan, some 30 or 35 miles north of Panjdeh, he was met by no Russian officer. They declined the proposed interview, as it would manifestly interfere with their hostile projects. On the 16th February, Colonel Ridgeway returned to Panjdeh, and found that Russian intrigue had so alarmed the Saruks that an outbreak was imminent. This outbreak, it was feared, would take the form of an attack on the weak—miserably weak—Afghan garrison. Nor would the Saruk headmen visit Colonel Ridgeway. This was entirely due to the injudicious conduct, prompted partly by jealousy and partly by a desire to magnify his own importance, of Kazi Saad-ud-din, the Amir's agent. He from first to last, by threats and almost by violence, had stood in the way of free intercourse between the Saruks and the representatives of Great Britain. Colonel Ridgeway saw but

one remedy for this evil, and that was to constrain the Amir's agent to rescind his veto. The main body of the Commission reached Kalah-i-maur on the 18th February. Colonel Ridgeway rode there (30 miles), obtained from the Amir's agent, in black and white, permission for the Saruk elders to visit him, and returned to Panjdeh on the 19th. I may add that what put the finishing-touch to Saruk fear and indignation was the discovery that the Commission, instead of remaining, as they hoped, amongst them, was bound for Gulran. They conceived that the British Government meant to leave them to the tender mercies of the Russians. But the British Commission did not mean to forsake them altogether. Colonel Ridgeway remained in Panjdeh with a small escort of some 10 sowars; while Mr Merk and Dr Owen, with 50 sabres, under Captain Heath, remained in support at Kalah-i-maur. Dr Owen shortly afterwards went to Panjdeh.

When Colonel Ridgeway returned to Panjdeh on the 19th, and made it known that, with the concurrence of the Amir's agent, his doors were open to every Saruk, all the headmen flocked to him. They stated plainly and fairly that, unless the British Government could assure them of its protection, they must in self-defence make overtures to the Russians. They were asked and advised, under the circumstances, simply to remain neutral—to side actively neither with Afghan nor Russian. The result of this interview was to allay somewhat the apprehensions of the Saruks, and that, too, only just in time. On the 25th February, Colonel Alikhanoff, with a body of Cossack and Turkoman horse (perhaps from 300 to 400 strong), surprised the Afghan outpost at Urush Doshan, some 10 miles north of Ak-tapa, and then pressing on, made, at about 4 P.M. the same day, a hostile demonstration against the Afghan position, which extended from Ak-tapa on the right to Pul-i-Khishti on the left. This demonstration was so made as to produce an impression that a strong attacking force was at hand. The Afghans were few in number, possessed only the ammunition in their pouches, and held a very extended position. However, they stood firm, and an Afghan officer riding forward, warned the Russian officer in command

that if he advanced farther the Afghans would at once open fire. After some parleying, during which references had to be made on the one side to Colonel Alikhanoff, and on the other to General Ghaus-ud-din, it was arranged that a Russian officer under Afghan escort should be allowed to advance as far as Pul-i-khishti *to count the arches*, and that then the Russians should withdraw. It is impossible to conjecture why this imbecile concession was made by the Afghan general. Suffice it to say that the Russian officer counted the arches *with great care* (possibly the corner of his eye took in a general survey of the Afghan position), and the Russian squadrons then retired. Had Alikhanoff but known the weakness of the defending force! But he could not afford to risk a disaster. As it was, both Saruk and Afghan looked upon his retirement as a repulse, and the British cause profited thereby. I must mention that prior to this demonstration some correspondence had passed between Colonels Ridgeway and Alikhanoff. The tone adopted by the former was pacific, as coming from a member of a peaceable Commission; the reply of the latter was openly hostile, and apparently sought to invest the British Commission with the character of a belligerent. On the morning of the 21st February it was found that a picket of Yulatan Saruks (Russian subjects) had been posted on a mound about a mile north of Pul-i-khishti, known as Kizil-tapa. I specify this because it should be clearly understood that the Russians never occupied Pul-i-khishti. The fact is, that in speaking about occurrences in a country of which the world knows next to nothing, it is necessary to make use of names of places that have attained some notoriety. Who has heard of Kizil-tapa? Doubtless it will become more familiar in the future. The justification of General Komaroff's attack on Pul-i-khishti on the 30th March hinges in part upon this distinction between Kizil-tapa and Pul-i-khishti. As a matter of fact, the attack, unprovoked as it was, admits of no excuse. It was a deliberate breach of the agreement of the 16th March made between the two Governments. Had the Russians ever held Pul-i-khishti, they might contend that the terms of that agree-

ment admitted of their advancing in force up to that point. But as they had never held it, such a pretext cannot hold water for a minute. Nor can it be contended that the Afghans advanced after the agreement was made. On the 20th of February, if not before, their troops held Pul-i-khishti. Moreover, had it been otherwise, the occupation of that position by a force holding Ak-tapa is not an advance but a lateral extension. It was not until Alikhanoff openly menaced the Afghan position on the 20th February that Afghan reinforcements were *summoned from* Herat. Moreover, it was then well known that Russian infantry and artillery were being massed at Hazrat Imam. Had the Afghans under these circumstances neglected to bring up reinforcements, they would have evinced a most culpable apathy. From first to last the action of the Russians was aggressive and provocative of conflict. The Afghans acted solely on the defensive, and showed a wonderful self-control under insulting provocation.

The crisis of the 20th February was tided over. The Saruks realised that British protection was not a dead-letter. Colonel Ridgeway continued to do all in his power to conciliate and gain the confidence of the Saruks. But Alikhanoff was not idle. At night his secret emissaries played on the fears and hopes of the headmen. Threatening letters from him poured in. He seized their flocks grazing north of Kizil-tapa; still they adhered in their allegiance to the British flag. They offered to turn out the picket of Yulatan Saruks at Kizil-tapa. It was, however, decided to give Alikhanoff no handle for bringing matters to a hostile issue. The Saruks were again counselled to remain neutral. But the reports of Russian warlike preparations became more and more frequent, and to the Saruks more and more alarming. The Russian star was *in the ascendant, and on the 1st March the* Saruk headmen were conspicuous by their absence from the British camp. They were worshipping the rising sun. Fortunately, just then no further advances of Russian troops were reported, and the telegrams from London stated that the Russian Government had promised to instruct its officers in the trans-Caspian

territory to avoid a collision. A day or two later Afghan reinforcements arrived from Herat. And thus a second crisis was tided over. On the 11th March, Captain Yate arrived. Colonel Ridgeway's duties required his presence at Gulran; so on the 20th March, the outlook being then seemingly peaceful, he left Panjdeh. What happened afterwards I have already recorded. I may safely say, that but for Colonel Ridgeway's efforts the Russians would have been in Panjdeh six weeks sooner than they actually were. The task of holding them in check was no light one, or unfraught with danger, and it was ably and manfully executed. It may reasonably be supposed that, with the exception of the editor of the 'Pall Mall Gazette' and Mr Labouchere, every Briton is convinced that from first to last Russia alone of all the three parties concerned in the settlement of the Russo-Afghan frontier has been the aggressor. It is obvious that such aggression, carried out as it was, treacherously and in defiance of all agreements and obligations, must have some motive, and that that motive must be some prospective gain. If Russia really desired an equitable and a strong frontier, she would recognise at once that a line drawn from the reputed Khwaja Salar on the Oxus, through Hazrat Imam on the Murghab, to Sher-tapa on the Hari Rud, would present such a frontier. Commence from the east. The Akcha oasis is separated from the Oxus by a strip of waterless desert 30 miles broad. Westward to the Murghab, this strip grows broader and broader, and it may be safely said that Merv and Charjui are connected with Maimena by no possible direct routes across this almost pathless desert. Arrived at the Murghab, it is seen that the Yulatan oasis is separated from the Panjdeh oasis by a tract about 90 miles in length, which is almost entirely uncultivable desert. The sandhills border on the very banks of the Murghab, which flows between high precipitous banks, whence water can either not at all, or only with great difficulty, be drawn for irrigation. There is one spot that serves as a connecting-link between Panjdeh and Yulatan, and that is the broad bay of fertile soil among the sandhills at Sari Yazi. The 60 miles that intervene

between that bay and Yulatan is a desert that could not be crossed by a large body of troops without special and tedious preparations, and that means so much valuable time. Consequently the Russian, who has his weather-eye open for future eventualities, has decided that a foothold south of that desert would be a most desirable acquisition. Looking a little farther forward he sees Panjdeh at the junction of the valleys of the Khushk and the Murghab. He sees that it is fertile, and that its people own many flocks and some wealth; that it is a good, defensive position against an attack from Merv; and that it commands on the one hand the directest road to Herat *viâ* the Khushk valley and Ardawan Pass, and on the other into Afghan Turkistan *viâ* Maruchak and Kalah Wali. He decides that it is more advantageous for him to hold a point whence he can menace Herat and Maimena, whence he can at any moment, if he so pleases, sever communications between Herat and Balkh, and which, if held by a hostile Power, would be a hard nut to crack. Yet another point or two unveil themselves before his penetrating and prescient glance. The possession of Panjdeh carries with it a claim to all territory as far as Maruchak (if not to Kalah Wali, which is also a Saruk settlement) on the Murghab, to Chaman-i-bed on the Khushk, and westward to the wells of Kaïun-Kuyusi and Ak-rabat, used by the Panjdeh shepherds and salt-parties, within 35 miles of the Hari Rud. The strip thus left on the right bank of the last-named river, the Russian will claim as the appanage of his pet model of virtue (*vide* the 'Moscow Gazette'), the Salor Turkomans, who, I have been told, occasionally come and gather the pistachios from the Pistalik around Agar-chashma. Similarly, the fact that the Tekkes of Merv and the Saruks of Yulatan annually remove a few camel-loads of salt from the Nimaksar, will be alleged as a conclusive proof that that promising source of revenue should swell the coffers of the Czar and not the Amir. The Russian will also have foreseen that two at least of the tribes of the Chahar Aimak, the Hazaras and the Jamshidis, being separated from Herat by somewhat difficult passes, will, as a matter of course, sooner or later come under the influence of the stronger and be

northern Power.[1] Indeed the ties between the Hazaras and Jamshidis on the one side, and the Saruks on the other, have been of so friendly a nature that the Amir has often found it convenient to collect his revenue at Panjdeh through the medium of the chiefs of the two former. Having won over these two tribes, the Russian schemer extends his rule to the northern outlets of the Baba, Ardawan, and Zarmast Passes, and thereby closes effectually the only roads between Herat and Balkh. Thus the flank of Afghan Turkistan is turned, and it is severed from one of its bases. For several months in the year that province is cut off from Kabul and the Hazarajat by the snow that blocks the passes of the Hindu Kush. As a natural result, the Uzbek population, no longer adequately controlled by Afghan domination, and not unnaturally drawn towards people of kindred race, will seek a *rapprochement* with Bokhara, instigated by Russia, or direct with the Governor of Russian Turkistan himself. During winter the Amir would have to maintain in Balkh and the other khanates garrisons strong enough to nip in the bud or crush any revolt, however serious. Can he spare the troops for this purpose? Can he afford increased military expenditure? Is it probable or improbable, judging by the past, that Russian intrigue would be busy alike with Uzbek subject and Afghan ruler? Even now the relations between the Amir and Sardar Mohammed Isa Khan are strained. There is a malcontent party in Maimena, if not in other khanates, ripe for intrigue and revolt. All these things considered, if any one ventures to assert that the Russians, once masters of Panjdeh, will, within a few years at the most, have extended their frontier to the Paropamisus, the Tirband-i-Turkistan, and the Hindu Kush, he will scarcely be accused of undue temerity. It is also worthy of remark that the cession to that Power of all territory north of a line drawn from Chaman-i-bed to Zulfikar will confer on it an important strategical advantage.

[1] Not long after the Afghan defeat at Panjdeh it was rumoured that the Firuzkuhis had thrown off their allegiance to the Amir. There appears to have been much truth in that rumour. Indeed it is doubtful whether the Firuzkuhis have yet (April 1886) been brought to a sense of their allegiance.

North of that line the Khushk and Hari Rud are separated by about 100 miles of waterless *chul*. Two forces advancing from Merv and Sarakhs respectively are absolutely severed the one from the other by this *chul*. They are exposed to the danger of being defeated in detail. But from Chaman-i-bed the required lateral communication with Zulfikar is established through Islim, Sumba Karez, and Ak-rabat. This line affords a connected front as a basis for further operations.

Such I believe to be some of the evils that will attend concession to Russian demands in this frontier question. When I said at the beginning of this letter that it appeared unnecessary to retain the Commission here, I did not intend to imply that a summer spent in this neighbourhood could not be well employed. Every department, scientific or otherwise, will find ample occupation. To-day Dr Aitchison has started for the downs, rich in vegetation, of southern Badkis. Captain Griesbach will, I hear, shortly be off on a geological tour. Of the officers of the Survey and Intelligence departments only Captains Maitland and Talbot are at present in camp. Mr Merk started to-day for Mashhad to impart an increased vitality to the postal arrangements. Captain Durand makes a tour of inspection round the Afghan outposts at Zulfikar, Kizil-bulak, Gulran, &c., &c. So the grass is not growing under the feet of the Commission. I believe I have not mentioned—what, however, is a matter of course—that with the departure of Sir Peter Lumsden the charge of the Commission reverted to Colonel Ridgeway. If pleasant summer-quarters and a new sphere for scientific activity are to be sought, the Commission could scarcely do better than move camp to the upper waters of the Hari Rud towards Obeh, or to the vicinity of the Band-i-Zarmast. But this is a matter that requires the concurrence of the Afghan officials. Much work yet remains to be done in connection with the survey of Persian territory from Sarakhs on the north to the Dasht-i-Naumid on the south. Recently a dispute about a place called Hashtadun, some 40 or 50 miles west of Ghorian, has arisen. The Persians are building a fort

there; whereas the Afghans claim the place as their own, on the ground that some twelve years ago, at a conference between Persians and Afghans, with a view to placing some check on Turkoman raids, the Shorab valley, in which Hashtadun is situated, was handed over to the Afghans to protect. Furthermore, it is argued that as the centre of the valley into which all the *karezes* discharge their water belongs to Afghanistan, therefore the whole must belong to it. Some 10 miles south-west of Kafir-Kalah there is a pass called Darband-i-Shorab, in the hills, through which all, or almost all, the *alamans* bound for Khaf, Ghorian, Kaïn, Birjand, Anardara, Sabzawar, and Seistan used to pass. Once through this *darband*, they shaped their course east, west, or south, according to their destination. It is not surprising that the subjugation of the Turkomans should have gained for Russia fame throughout Asia. The mere liberation of thousands of Persian and Afghan captives is no small claim to gratitude. Even to the Turkomans, once subdued, she seems to have behaved with conciliatory moderation. I travelled from Mashhad recently with a Jamshidi guide. The old fellow told me he had been thrice taken captive by the Turkomans. The first time he was taken to Khiva, and sold as a slave there. Before General Kaufmann subdued the Khan of Khiva in 1873, he had purchased his freedom, but continued to reside there till 1874, when he returned to his home at or near Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam. Since then he had been twice taken prisoner by the Tekkes and carried to Merv. On one occasion two of his daughters were captured with him, and as he could not ransom them (his own ransoms, he said, cost him 2000 *tomans*—£666), he gave one in marriage to a Tekke and the other to a Salor. The latter, he said, was a particularly good sort of fellow, and had just presented him with two horses, one of which he was riding, and was willing to sell for a consideration, and the other he had already sold in the camp of the Boundary Commission; and at the recollection of all this he again repeated, "He is a most excellent son-in-law."

The Russians have remitted, I hear, to all their Turkoman subjects all taxes for seven years from date of annexation,

and after that a tithe of the produce of the soil, and one per cent of the flocks and herds, will be taken. One cannot find fault with them for seeking to conciliate their own subjects. It is the right policy. It is when we see them endeavouring, with base underhand intrigue, to undermine the loyalty of their neighbour's subjects, that we have good grounds for resentment. Such intrigue is perfectly inseparable from the Muscovite nature and principles, and, if I mistake not, is already at work among the Chahar Aimak. I have heard more than one Turk, taken prisoner during the war of 1876-77, laud Russian kindness. This is part of a prescient policy. Even the Afghans wounded at Panjdeh have, I hear, received every care and attention in the Russian hospitals. There are no Russian troops now actually in Panjdeh proper. The Panjdeh hamlets extend continuously from Maruchak to Ak-tapa, but Panjdeh cultivation extends to Kurban Niyaz, 12 miles north of Ak-tapa. A Yulatani Saruk named Ewaz Khan has been appointed Russian representative there. A strong Russian force is said to be encamped near Kizil-tapa in the midst of the Panjdeh fields, with a weak picket at Ak-tapa.

PARWANA, *near* HERAT, *20th May.*

When it became known some eight or nine days ago that the Indian section of the Commission would in all probability spend the summer in this neighbourhood, our summer-quarters became the burning question of the moment. On the 14th, a party, composed of Captains Maitland and Griesbach and Lieutenant Wright, was leaving Tirpul for the neighbourhood of the Ardawan Pass, where it is proposed to camp during the summer. I obtained permission to accompany them. On the evening of the 13th, Colonel Stewart came in. He was to leave for London on the 15th. Our marches to Khush-rabat, at the southern entrance to the Dahana-i-Ardawan, were:—

		Miles.
May 14.	Rauzanak, ...	19
" 15.	Shaikhiwan, ...	19
" 16.	Kalah-i-Sinjau, ...	18
" 17.	Khush-rabat, ...	12

On the 15th we met Major Holdich and Captain Peacock returning from Herat. The former continued on his way back to Tirpul; the latter, with Captain Maitland, we left encamped at Rabat-i-Charkha (one of the many *rabats* built by Shah Abbas on the highroad between Mashhad and Herat), half-way between Rauzanak and Shaikhiwan, at the latter of which places we (Griesbach, Wright, and self) encamped. The Ghorian valley, with its villages, orchards, and extensive area of fields under cultivation, spoke well for the productiveness of the district. From Shaikhiwan we turned due north for four miles to the foot of the low hills skirting the Hari Rud valley to the north. Striking the channel of the stream that issues from the Ardawan Pass, and flowing past Sinjau falls into the Hari Rud above Shaikhiwan, we wended our way up its bed for three or four miles, until the frequent recurrence of quicksands, and finally an impenetrable barrier of boulders, obliged us to scramble up to the regular road on the plateau above. We were rewarded, however, for any slight extra difficulties of the road, by the sight of a curious phenomenon of nature, which Captain Griesbach photographed. This was a solid clay pillar, some 40 feet high and 12 to 15 feet in diameter, surmounted by a capital of conglomerate. The crust of the surrounding plain is similarly composed of clay and sandstone overlaid with a thin layer of conglomerate. The action of water, partly that of the stream itself, partly that of rain, had washed away all the looser formations around the more solid pillar of clay, and left it with its conglomerate capital standing. About half a mile above this the stream descends rapidly in a succession of cascades from the level of the plains to that of the channel or trough that had served us as a road. For Afghanistan it was a pretty bit of scenery—the clear, sparkling water bubbling and boiling over the rocks, the rugged banks overgrown with trees, shrubs, and grass. Here we breakfasted, and then, in defiance of all medical advice, bathed in the limpid waters of a huge bath hollowed in the natural rock. Such a contrast to the murky fluid of the Hari Rud! We could not enjoy it too much, whether applied internally or externally. As we approached Sinjau the low

range crossed by the Ardawan Pass lay straight ahead, while east of it towered the Kuh-i-Baba, and east of that in the dim distance loomed the conical peak of the Band-i-Zarmast. To our right the Dawendar and Safid-Kuh ranges, between which flows the Hari Rud, with their summits and slopes still garbed in snow, were clearly discernible. We camped two miles south of the ruined mud-fort of Sinjau, at a spot where the soil, owing to the proximity of the water to the surface, was clothed with luxuriant grass and other vegetation, on which our horses and transport-animals feasted royally. Our mules, however, were not destined to an undisturbed enjoyment of so much luxury. In the night a couple of (probably) Firuzkuhi thieves walked off with six of them. The theft was not discovered till daybreak, and then the search instituted by the mule-driver and some sowars of our Afghan escort resulted in the discovery of their tracks. They also knew, by evidence that would be caviare to the general, that two or three of the mules were mounted. The mule-driver and a Hazara sowar started off in pursuit, overtook the thieves (who proved to be two in number, though the Hazara, seeing them through the double lens of love of a good yarn and desire to enhance his own prowess, magnified them into six) some distance north of the Sang-Kotal Pass, recaptured the mules, and brought them safe to Khush-rabat. On the morning of the 18th, the Hazara graphically described how, when he sighted the thieves and mules, he raised a valiant shout and discharged his musket—harmlessly. Luckily he did not shoot a mule. The thieves showed them a clean pair of heels. No attempt was made to pursue or capture them. The muleteer was only too happy to see his mules once more. As for the gallant Hazara, if the enemy would persist in bolting ignominiously, and so deprive him of the satisfaction of slaying them, as he undoubtedly would have done, all ... one, blame cannot justly be laid at his door.

From Sinjau to Khush-rabat the road follows
of the stream. There are no signs of
except an occasional camp of *maldars*
flocks of sheep and goats, herds of

few ponies. The grazing in the valleys on the south slopes of the Paropamisus is very good, although it is nothing in comparison with the miles and miles of grass-grown downs to the north of that range. It is sufficiently well known by this time that Badkis is as fertile a country as any in Asia. No one could wish for a more lovely climate or more fertile soil than the downs stretching northward from the Paropamisus to Khushk, Chaman-i-bed, Ak-rabat, and Karez Elias. So copious is the rainfall that no artificial irrigation is required to mature the crops grown on these lands. The waving grasses would furnish sustenance to countless thousands of domesticated animals. To inhale the fresh bracing breezes that blow across these downs in May is like imbibing a new lease of life. No spring-day in England could be more delicious and reinvigorating. There is but one want—trees, and they can be planted. Why not have an English colony here? That would be a better barrier to Russian intrigue than the Turkoman and Chahar Aimak. It would also be a practical demonstration of England's intent to yield not another ell to Russia.

On the 17th instant I walked for some four or five miles along the Rabat-i-sangi Pass, and on the 18th rode through the Ardawan Pass to Ziarat-i-Khwaja Mallal, a spot that I visited in November last on our march from Kuhsan to Khushk. The entrance to the Ardawan Pass is about half a mile north of Khush-rabat. Two miles from the entrance the route to Rabat-i-sangi branches off to the westward. It is a steep but not rough road, leading up to Rabat-i-Mirza, five miles farther ahead, on the crest of the pass. Rabat-i-sangi is eight or ten miles beyond that. The crest of the Ardawan Kotal is seven or eight miles north of Khush-rabat, while Khwaja Mallal is four miles farther. The road follows the stream to the foot of the *kotal*, leaves it there, and picks up a new streamlet on the other side. The Ardawan Pass is not so easy as it has been reported to be. As I said before, nothing could be more delightful (out of Europe) than the climate of the country. Every little vale opening into it was green with luxuriant vegetation, and contributed its little rill

to swell the bigger stream, that seemingly rises near the Band-i-Kara-Kaitu. It is not everywhere in Asia that we can gladden our eyes with the sight of May blossoms. It appears that the highroad from Herat to Merv and Sarakhs ran *viâ* Parwana, Khush-rabat, and Rabat-i-sangi, for on this route only are found caravanserais and water-tanks at regular intervals. At Khush-rabat are the ruins of a town of some size, perhaps destroyed by fire, and of a brick bridge of eight arches across the Ardawan stream. Fording the stream near this bridge, we marched to-day to Parwana (12 miles), passing on the way Chughur-rabat, with its broken-down old bridge of nine arches thrown across the stream hard by. With regard to all or most of the ruined brick structures in this neighbourhood, it may be noticed that the foundations are composed of large unhewn stones cemented together. Apparently these foundations are not buried in the soil, but erected on its surface. At all events, they are not of a nature to resist atmospheric action, since they invariably show more signs of decay than the brick edifice resting on them. Frequently the base of a building has completely mouldered away. Both the bricks and cement used are of first-rate quality, and yet the walls evince a determined tendency to lean away from the body of any edifice. This may be due to the decay of the foundations, or to the action of frost and a very dry atmosphere. Parwana is a large village surrounded for several miles by cultivated fields. The people were civil, and seemed well to do. They own large flocks of kine, sheep, and goats, the milk of which is all sent to Herat for sale. The towers of refuge still standing in the fields are monuments of the former Turkoman raids.

22d May.

We halted at Parwana yesterday. Captain Griesbach having a letter of introduction to the Naib, was in hopes of being allowed to take photographs of some of the most interesting features of the neighbourhood. However, apparently the Naib (governor) is not an ardent votary of scientific progress. He is probably busy [illegible] airs

the Herat defences that are now being pushed forward.[1] It is no longer necessary to withhold the information that Colonel Stewart, Major Holdich, and Captain Peacocke visited Herat on the 10th and 11th instant. During their stay they were the guests of the Naib, and resided in a house close to the gubernatorial palace of Chahar-Bagh. From the house of the Sipah-Salar in the citadel, they looked on at a parade of the garrison. They were received formally in durbar by the Naib, attended by the Sipah-Salar, Naib-Salar, and several generals of division and brigade. General Ghaus-ud-din was absent. I am informed that the manner of all classes, priests, soldiery, and population in general, was friendly and agreeable. It is a curious thing that I can meet no one to corroborate the Amir's reports of the bitter fanaticism of the bloodthirsty Kabuli. On the afternoon of the 11th the three officers above named left Herat. It goes without saying that thirty hours were not spent in Herat for nothing. It is satisfactory to hear that Afghan reinforcements have already reached Herat, and that more are *en route*, and that the guns, rifles, and ammunition presented to the Amir by the Viceroy are, at least a great portion of them, on their way thither. This looks like business; but it is to be feared that no amount of exertion on the part of the Afghans alone can long keep the Russians out of Herat. It is satisfactory to find the priestly classes fostering and not discouraging favourable feelings towards the Anglo-Afghan alliance. It is reported that the Mullas have publicly heralded the arrival of British officers in Herat as an auspicious omen, and invoked the divine blessing on the British alliance, which by the Amir's orders has been proclaimed throughout Afghanistan.

The Commission marched from Tirpul on the 18th, and is

[1] But although we failed in obtaining an invitation to visit Herat, we encamped for the day near the Musalla (which has now been destroyed, as affording cover to assailants), and took the opportunity of going over the ground to the north and west of the city. The defences of Herat are naturally very strong, and much has since been done to strengthen weak points. That the city is commanded from the high ground to the north is well known. It is, however, the opinion of those best qualified to judge, that Heràt is capable of a prolonged resistance, provided there be no internal treachery. This last is the foe that the Amir has most reason to fear.

Muckbundah Camp on the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

now halting at Shaikhiwan. It is proposed to camp somewhere about the Ardawan Pass—whether north or south of it depends on the facility of obtaining fuel and supplies. The climate to the north is undoubtedly the most salubrious, not to mention the delightful waving fields of grass and flowers. Delicious water can be procured on either side. On the night of the 16th, almost all the Persian mule-drivers bolted from the camp at Tirpul, carrying off a few mules. It is somewhat curious that our six mules should also disappear on the night *of the 16th. Had we known of what had occurred that night* at Tirpul, we should have regarded the yarn about thieves as a mere cock-and-bull story, and equally so if the mules had not been recovered. The runaways from Tirpul were promptly pursued and most of them brought back. They probably took alarm at the idea of going farther away from their own frontier, or possibly some evil-disposed persons have been intimidating them. It was rumoured the other day that the Russians were hiring mule-transport around Mashhad, and offering a higher rate than that given by the Commission, exorbitant as it is. This possibly may have tempted our muleteers to desert. Many of the Persian servants, too, are resigning their berths in camp.

25th May.

I camped at Deh-i-Shaikh, two miles east of Parwana, on the 23d, marched to Khush-rabat yesterday, and to-day rejoined the Commission, which I found encamped on the banks of the Ab-i-Sinjau, some eight miles north of Shaikhiwan. Our latest news hints at a new rupture in the negotiations. *As Mr Condie Stephen has reached London with Captain* Yate's Report of the Panjdeh affair, it is now to be hoped that the statements of the Russian Government and of General Komaroff will be emphatically refuted. Lord Granville has telegraphed to Colonel Ridgeway, requesting him to thank Captain Yate for his report. Captain Durand is expected to return in a few days, having completed his tour of inspection round the Afghan outposts: Dr Aitchison is with him botanising.[1] Mr Merk having completed his duties at Mashhad, is

[1] Dr Aitchison's valuable collection of the fauna and flora of Central Asia

returning. Captains Maitland and Peacocke are away trying to add to the number of the practicable passes over the Paropamisus, the names of which are already legion. Captain Gore and Dr Weir are still at or near Mashhad. I left Captain Griesbach breaking stones near Khush-rabat. Every one else is here. Surveyor Mahomed Sharif has just completed a satisfactory survey from Herat to Obeh. There is no doubt that nothing has irritated the Russians more than the good use the Commission has made of its time here. Miles and miles of new country have been surveyed and explored, and most valuable political and strategical information gained. It cannot be denied that the non-advent of the Russian Commissioner and the conduct of General Komaroff and Colonel Alikhanoff have damaged British prestige and discredited the British Commission. But after all, the laugh has not been all on their side.

With regard to the conception, which I see is gaining currency, that Sarakhs "gives Russia a practical command of the open country between the Murghab and the Hari Rud, and that the only scientific frontier then possible for the Amir's dominions was the line of the Paropamisus," I can only trust that some of my recent letters may tend to dispel that illusion, which owes its origin solely to want of acquaintance with the geographical features of the territory in question. I deem it sufficient now to repeat emphatically that Sarakhs does not command Badkis, that a frontier drawn from Sher Tapa to Hazrat Imam is a scientific frontier, and that the "line of the Paropamisus" is a scientific frontier unworthy even of the science of the dark ages. It merits notice that reports are already current that the Firuzkuhis, taking advantage of the effacement, temporary if not permanent, of the Afghan before Russian rule in Badkis, have proclaimed themselves independent of Herat. The report is denied, it is true, but none the less is a harbinger of the inevitable results of a Russian occupation of Panjdeh.

Report says the Russians have warned the Afghans at Bala

has long ere this reached Kew, where he is now employed in arranging and classifying them.

Murghab *not to send an outpost to Karawulkhana*. Such interference is more unwarrantable than an open occupation of Maruchak. The Afghans should place their outpost at Karawulkhana, and leave to the Russians the *onus* of ousting it.

CAMP SINJAU, *31st May*.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the best method of utilising Afghanistan for the defence of India, it has been long unanimously agreed that it must, if possible, be used as a safeguard to it. The foreign policy of India has been guided by that settled principle ever since Russia, using Persia as a cat's-paw, besieged Herat and tampered with the Amir in 1838. The result of this policy is that at the present moment the Amir and the Afghan race stand forth professedly the allies of Great Britain. In the event of war between Russia and England, the value of Afghanistan as the first line of Indian defences obviously depends mainly on the attitude of the Amir and his subjects. Even at this moment, when the Amir and the Viceroy of India have just met in conference, and when the investiture of the former with one of the most prized of British Orders, and the presentation to him of materials of war, constituting a most important accession to his military strength, the public entertains grave doubts of the Amir's fidelity, and is apprehensive that that very material of war may be employed in the attack and not in the defence of India. Nay, more; Lord Kimberley stated in the House of Lords on the 12th May, "our frontier should be defensible in case of Afghanistan being assailed or hostile." Even the Secretary of State for India admits that Afghanistan may be hostile. However, at this moment Afghanistan is professedly friendly, and in discussing its value as a defence to India, we will assume that it is entirely friendly. There is one other important point affecting the defensibility of Afghanistan, and that is the attitude of Persia. That country may be neutral, the ally of England, or the ally of Russia. In the present case, presuming that the circumstantial and reiterated reports of the Shah's friendly leaning towards, and of his offer of an alliance with England, were not unfounded, we will assume

that Persia throws in her lot with us. I have therefo
assumed the conditions most favourable to England and Indi
—viz., the active alliance of the Persians and Afghans—thos
most favourable conditions of which the present Ministry ha
thought fit not to avail itself. Another factor that is not
without importance is the behaviour of the Hazaras and
Heratis; and as that is a matter of uncertainty, we had best
represent them as passive. It has been generally agreed that
the decision arrived at by the Viceroy and Amir was that, in
event of war with Russia, the Afghans should as long as
possible maintain unaided the defence of their own father-
land, and that only when the stability of the Amir's rule was
endangered should British troops enter Afghanistan, and there
oppose further Russian progress. With these premises it is
not hard to foresee that, within a few months at the most,
after the commencement of warlike operations, the capital of
the Amir will be in danger of falling into Russian hands. It
is customary to look to Herat as the objective of a Russian
attack on India through Afghanistan. Why so? If Afghan-
istan is the bulwark of India, then the bulwark must be sur-
mounted before the storming-party can gain a footing on the
deck. Kabul is the stronghold of Afghan independence, and
until Kabul is in the hands of Russia, the bulwark of India is
still unsurmounted. Herat and Balkh and all Afghan Tur-
kistan may be overrun by Russian legions: the rule of the
Amir will not thereby be overthrown, though it may be
shaken. If, therefore, the Government of India is under an
engagement to support the Amir on his throne, it must be
prepared to interpose a British army between Kabul and a
victorious Russian army advancing thereon. But at the pre-
ent moment the Government of India is showing signs
f activity solely in the direction of the Pishin. That is
e destination of the two *corps d'armée* warned for active
rvice. Thither tons upon tons of stores are being hurried.
ere transport is being collected for 25,000 fighting men and
000 followers (a follower for every fighting man—far too
ny). Thither two railways are being constructed—the one
Hurnai, the other up the Bolan. The new Indian loan of

£10,000,000 is to be devoted to the Hurnai and Bolan railways, to the construction of a military road from Dera Ghazi Khan to the Pishin, and of railways to the east of the Indus. This latter system of railways will have no other object than to facilitate the massing of troops at Mooltan, Bahawalpur, Sukkur, or Ruk, thence to be conveyed to the Pishin. The Sukkur bridge is part of the scheme. Not that the perfection of this scheme is a subject for cavil or criticism. On the contrary, what is remarkable is, that while such strenuous efforts are being made for the defence of India on the side of the Pishin, nothing is being done for the defence of Kabul, the seat of government of "our own Amir." And yet it is essential that the Russians should not occupy Kabul, because the worst results may be apprehended from such an occurrence —viz., the defection of the Amir, and with him of all the Afghans. To see Herat with its Iranian, and Balkh with its Turanian population, occupied by Russians, would but make the Afghan breast burn to reconquer them. But the Russians in Kabul, the Amir a refugee in India or a renegade in the Russian camp, the Afghans defeated, demoralised, and leaderless—that is a different matter. It were strange then if they did not listen to the voice of the tempter luring them to the loot of Hindustan, and to the revival of the glorious days of Mahmud and Taimur, Nadir, and Ahmed Shah, and to the promptings of their own judgment, bidding them forsake the cause of the effete Briton and espouse that of the all-conquering Russian. Nay, more; who can say that the Russians may not render the arm of the Afghan powerless by the threats of such vengeance as they wrought on the Yamuds in 1873, and the Akhal Tekkes in 1880? Under such circumstances fear and self-interest would overrule patriotism in the Afghan breast, and the actual evidence of Muscovite victory would outweigh the vague possibility of an ultimate British triumph. Therefore an Indian army must oppose the advance of a Russian army on Kabul; and therefore the communications between Kabul and India must be such as to admit of a British *corps d'armée* preoccupying a good defensive position on the Balkh-Kabul road. What that position

should be is for those who know the country to decide; and the more distant it is from Kabul towards Balkh, the more perfect must be the arrangements and means for the transport thither of British troops. Viewing the extensive preparations in progress for massing troops in the Pishin, and also those possibly for an occupation of Kandahar, the idea not unnaturally arises that it is intended to meet a Russian advance from Balkh by a British advance from Kandahar *viâ* Ghazni. But on reference to the maps, we find that Kabul is about 360 miles from Kandahar and 340 from Balkh. Therefore, *cæteris paribus* (without considering that the British troops would not move till news of the Afghan defeat and retreat towards Kabul arrived), the Russians would reach Kabul first. The Balkh-Kabul road may be an exceedingly difficult one, but the Kandahar-Kabul is none of the easiest. The passes of the Hindu Kush are said to be usually blocked with snow for several months in the year.[1] But the Russians being well aware of that, would so time their invasion of Afghan Turkistan as to cross those passes just as the snow had left them; and during the seven or eight following months, the passes being open, they could retreat at any time, if disaster befell them. It is clear, then, that an army at Kandahar is too remote to be of any certain defence to Kabul. The same objection would not exist if the Afghans would lay in supplies for 20,000 men at every stage from Kandahar to Kabul, and if a force of 20,000 men, with mule and pony transport, was maintained at the former place, ready to move at a day's notice. That force could reach Kabul within twenty days; whereas the Russians, opposed and harassed by the Afghans, who would of course destroy all the supplies they could as they retreated, would do well if they covered ten miles a-day. Why, however, look to Kandahar for succour,

1 Yavorski, in his account of General Stolietoff's Mission to Kabul in 1878-79, says that the Irak, Kalu, and Haji Khak Passes "are entirely covered with snow only in the months of December, January, February, and sometimes March." In December 1878 the Kalu, Unai, and Ak-rabat Passes had scarcely any snow on them; but it was an exceptionally mild winter. A topographer accompanying the Mission roughly surveyed the road from the Oxus to Kabul. The Afghan escort prevented any thorough survey being undertaken.

when Peshawar, Thal, and Bannu are so much nearer? But it is not sufficient that the Khaibar and Kurrum roads are available. When a *corps d'armée*, with its vast quantities of commissariat, ordnance, and field-equipment stores has to be moved rapidly, nothing but a railway supplies the requirements of the case. But the railway termini are now at Peshawar and Kushalgarh, and there is not a whisper of an extension. It can be easily understood that the Amir would look askance at the idea of connecting his capital by railway with Peshawar. Nevertheless, both in his own interest and that of India, it would be very desirable. Moreover, irrespective of the defence of Kabul, there is another important strategical reason for constructing a railway to it. Supposing that the Russians occupy Herat and Afghan Turkistan, and there await an attack from the combined Afghan and British forces, where would it be best to attack them? Supposing we defeated them in Herat, we should in no way endanger the security of their position at Maimena and Balkh. But if we drove them from these last-named places across the Oxus, we should directly threaten their line of communication from Herat through Panjdeh to Merv. Nor must we overlook the importance of the road from Kabul through the Hazarajat to Daulat-yar, and thence *viâ* Obeh to Herat. It is known to be practicable. Should the Russians at Herat answer the British advance on Balkh by a counter-advance on Kandahar, the detachment of a British division *viâ* Daulat-yar on Herat would probably necessitate their abandoning such an enterprise. In pushing a railway to Kabul, as compared with Kandahar there is one objection—viz., that the prospective commercial advantages accruing thereto are unimportant. From Kandahar a railway could be constructed to Farah or Lash Juwain, and thence across central Persia to Baghdad and Alexandretta. If England desires direct, or approximately direct, connection by rail with India, that line of railway must be secure from the possibility of Russian interference. What are we to gain by linking our Indian system with that of Russia in Central Asia? At present the commercial dealings of India with the few millions that

inhabit Turkistan and trans-Caspiana are not of such magnitude as to induce the belief that a railway from Kandahar to Merv, or from Kabul to Samarcand, would even pay its own expenses. If Russia is particularly keen about extending her railway system to the confines of Afghanistan, solely of course for commercial purposes, let her in the ardour of her ambition swell still more the measure of her financial embarrassments, and run her railways finally into a *cul de sac* at Sarakhs, Panjdeh, or Kilif. Meanwhile, let India content itself with the construction of such strategical railways as are necessary to the defence of its north-west frontier; and if further extension be thought necessary, let it be carried out through that territory which, in the coming partition of Asia, is England's natural heritage—viz., southern Persia and Turkish Arabia.

A party of us crossing yesterday a pass some eight miles east of camp into the Herat valley, obtained a fine view both of city and valley. Below, or to the south, at our feet, lay Sangbast, where it has been proposed to construct a defensive position. Beyond that stretched the Pahra valley and Du-shakh range. The Herat valley itself is of course one vast carpet of fields studded with forts, villages, orchards, and gardens. Away to the south-east towered the snow-capped peaks of the Siyah-Kuh. Captain Durand and Dr Aitchison returned to camp on the 27th after a tour in southern Badkis—the former to inspect the Afghan outposts, the latter to botanise. Opposite Kaman-i-bihisht, which is 40 miles south of Zulfikar, some sowars, suspected to belong to a Russian surveying or exploring party, were seen on the Persian bank. These sowars stated they had brought the mails from Turbat, but could not get across the river. This, however, was a patent falsehood, and the sole object they had in view in opening a conversation was to ascertain to whom the little camp on the Afghan bank belonged. This incident merits attention, because it is well known that Russia intends, as soon as opportunity offers, to annex a large strip of territory on the left bank of the Hari Rud, southward to Karez and Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, and westward to Faraiman.

Much has been spoken of late about fighting for a little strip of desert. The opinion here prevails that the honour of England is the real *casus belli*. But leaving that out of the question, the subject of dispute does no doubt resolve itself into "a little strip of desert." I have already stated why that "little strip" is so valuable. I now propose to describe some portions of it, especially the Nimaksar. As ere long it is to be Russian, it will in future be for Russians to describe it.

The Nimaksar or Yar-yulan (sunken ground) is a valley some 30 miles in length from east to west, and its greatest breadth from north to south is 11 miles. Its western edge rests on the road from Kungruali to Ak-rabat, and its eastern on the Band-i-Duzan (salt-range). The meaning of Nimaksar is "salt country" or "salt district." The plateau that encircles this extensive valley or depression is composed of undulating downs, similar to those of the rest of the *chul*. *Chul*, I may explain, is the term applied to the undulating downs, often of fertile soil—which after the rains afford magnificent grazing, but are absolutely devoid of springs or streams of water—constituting the greater part of northern Badkis and of the country that stretches east from Panjdeh and Maruchak, and thence skirting the north-eastern edge of the oases of Maimena, Andkhui, and Akcha to the Oxus. The plateau around the Nimaksar is about 2200 feet above the sea-level, whereas the western salt-lake is fully 1000 feet lower. There are two lakes, western and eastern, separated from each other by a ridge some 1800 feet above the level of the sea. The most recent important alteration in the localisation of the several Turkoman tribes was caused by the invasion of Merv by the Tekkes. These Tekkes have gradually worked their way eastward from the east shore of the Caspian, and after occupying Akhal and Old Sarakhs, attacked the Saruks at Merv in overwhelming numbers about the year 1855. The Saruks, after a stubborn and prolonged resistance, finally abandoned the Merv oasis, and settled at Panjdeh. The Saruks in their turn displaced the Salors. Since the year 1860, or thereabouts, the Tekkes of Merv have had a monopoly of the salt of the western lake, and the

Besides the three main routes mentioned above, there also a direct route from Maruchak through Kalah-i-maur, the Khushk, joining the Panjdeh route at Duzan-yapiti, tw stages from the eastern lake. Another route runs direct fro the south-east corner of the same lake through Islim t Chaman-i-bed, on the Khushk, by which the Jamshidis o Khushk and the Hazaras of Kalah-i-nau obtain their supply o salt through the agency of the Saruks. A third route is that used by the Salors of Sarakhs.

Northern Badkis and the Nimaksar were explored and surveyed by Captains Maitland and Yate in February last, but at that time the interests of the Government were deemed to demand that no information that was obtained should be made public. For this reason, much that was done, or happened, in February and March, the critical era in the annals of the Commission, will probably never be published; and perhaps the feelings and opinions then prevalent throughout the Commission will never find true or adequate expression. Among the many reports current at that time there now seems to be one to which a certain comical character attaches. It is said that towards the middle of February a Russian officer—a colonel, it was said—attended by a standard-bearer, a trumpeter, and a small Turkoman escort, might have been seen making their way across the desert downs between the Zulfikar Pass and Chaman-i-bed. At intervals this party would halt on the top of some elevated undulation, and then this officer, with the aid of the standard-bearer and the trumpeter, would proclaim to the desolate wilds that the Czar of all the Russias had been graciously pleased to extend over them the ægis of his suzerainty. Thus, it is said, at Ak-rabat, Islim, &c., the ceremony of annexation was earried out with no other witnesses than the heavens above nd the earth below. Did the Turkoman escort cap each roclamation with cheers three times three? History does ot relate. Possibly this pioneer of Russian aggression found audience in the shape of some gaping Cymon in the garb a Saruk shepherd and his stolid flock. About the same ne, it is said, a Russian party came down to Islim, where

supplies had been collected for the British Commission on its march to Gulran, and expressed a desire to purchase those supplies. The precise terms of the answer given by the Afghan guard is not recorded, but it was a decided negative.

Of news from the Russian frontier we have but little now. When at Mashhad six weeks ago, I recollect hearing that the Russian general at Ashkabad was in the habit of marching a portion of his garrison out of the cantonment one day, and in again in a different uniform a few days later. I hear that this edifying farce is still being kept up. Is it to impress the Central Asiatic, or to delude British sources of information? There are some 800 Russians still encamped between Kizil-tapa and Pul-i-khishti.

CAMP SINJAU, *9th June.*

Here everything seems at a standstill. It is true the Survey and Intelligence departments show some signs of life; but while they are burning to be off to Obeh or Daulat-yar, and thence to explore the routes over the Hindu Kush to Bamian and Balkh (now that Russia threatens to close at any time the roads from Herat to Maimena passing north of the Tirband-i-Turkistan, these routes become of the highest importance), some combination of untoward circumstances retains them in enforced inaction. One of the Survey subordinates has been straight to Obeh from Herat, and another is working his way thither from Ghorian by the south side of Herat. Captains Maitland, Talbot, and Griesbach have started for the Davendar, a lofty range north of the Hari Rud between Herat and Obeh. Dr Aitchison has transferred the sphere of his labours to Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam. Captain Peacocke starts in a day or two for the Du-shakh range, and is hopeful that he may be permitted to proceed thence south of Herat to Taiwarra in the upper waters of the Farah Rud. This country, inhabited by the Taimuris, is absolutely unknown. Captains Maitland and Talbot are not without hopes that their travels may be extended from the Davendar to Daulat-yar, and even farther. The exploration of the routes from the latter place to Kabul is no less important than that of the routes to Balkh. We have been expecting to move

camp for some days past; two or three days ago it was intended to move towards Ghorian. I believe the Hari Rud is as yet scarcely fordable for baggage-animals. The cavalry, as the supply of grass was running short, marched 11 miles up-stream towards the Ardawan Pass five days ago. We shall probably follow them directly. Our prolonged stay here, and the limited sphere now open for the operations of the Survey and other departments, are in the main due to the uncertainty still felt as to the pacific issue of the negotiations between England and Russia. Captain Gore is still at Mashhad, intent upon fixing with scientific accuracy its position on the earth's surface. He has also surveyed the neighbourhood of Mashhad. Dr Weir has started from that town with Mr Finn, British Consul at Resht, to visit the northern frontier of Persia.

The Musalla is doomed. It is a magnificent edifice of the architectural style in vogue in Persia four centuries ago. It was built towards the close of the fifteenth century by Sultan Hussain Mirza, a great-great-grandson of Taimur Lang. The founder lies buried in it. It is now about to be sacrificed to the need of rendering Herat defensible.

A *duffadar* of the Intelligence branch who accompanied the party of officers that recently inspected the Herat fortifications, recognised in that city an Arab horse as having been in the possession of the late Sir Louis Cavagnari at the time of his assassination at Kabul. The owner himself also admitted that it had belonged to Cavagnari.

CAMP *near* KHUSH-RABAT, 18*th June.*

An Indian paper has gravely informed the public that Captain Jennings, R.E., has recently discovered a strip of neutral territory between Persia and Afghanistan, by which an army-corps could march from the Persian Gulf littoral to Herat without entering either of the above-named countries. When we were in Seistan last October, Colonel Ridgeway had occasion to make some inquiries into the boundary fixed by Sir F. Goldsmid's arbitration. Most people are under the impression that there at least the frontiers of Persia and

Afghanistan conjoin; and certainly, from all I saw and heard in Seistan, such would seem to be the case. Captain Jennings, it seems, has found it to be otherwise. With regard to the Perso-Beluch frontier, I was under the impression that it had been surveyed and approximately fixed by Sir F. Goldsmid's assistants, Captains Lovett and St John. From Seistan northward I am aware that the frontier is but vaguely defined. The fact is, that the "debatable zone" is, like that which has of late all but caused a war between England and Russia, a mere "strip of desert." I shall be glad to know how Captain Jennings proposes to march an army-corps through a desert 200 miles long. There neither water nor supplies are to be found. If he transgresses the limits of that desert track, he will find himself either in Afghan or Persian territory, and so fails to fulfil the reputed conditions of his route. Most people would have been disposed to doubt whether it were possible to find any route, even in the vicinity of the Perso-Afghan frontier, by which an army-corps could march from the Persian Gulf to Herat. The journals above quoted further state that Captain Jennings arrived within five marches of Herat. Curious we never heard even a rumour of his propinquity!

For us the chief interest of the last English mail just arrived centres in General Komaroff's further and detailed report on the affair of 30th March. This, we are told, has been published *in extenso*, filling seven columns of the 'Official Messenger' of 12th May. As all the British officers who had a personal share in the events of that period are now in camp, it may be as well, seeing that the Government has not published the report by Captain Yate which Mr Condie Stephen carried home with such meritorious expedition, to state how far their version of the affair agrees with that of General Komaroff, and what comments they have to make thereon.

General Komaroff states at the outset that he advanced to occupy Dash Kepri "pursuant to instructions." It would therefore appear that the Russian Government had instructed him to occupy that place in force, taking advantage of the erroneous report credited by the British Government that

the Russian outposts already held Dash Kepri. In connection with this fact, however, some words of Komaroff's report merit attention. He says: "All this while, up to the 30th [March], not one of our outposts extended beyond the points already occupied by our militia in front of Kizil-tapa on the 17th." In this sentence we have a distinct recognition by Komaroff of the existence of the agreement of 17th, or rather 16th March, and an acknowledgment that the Russian outposts at that date did not extend beyond Kizil-tapa. And yet he had instructions from his Government, in defiance of the agreement of 16th March, to occupy Dash Kepri. But it did not suit the Russian book to take it by a *coup de main*. So he had to delay from the 25th to the 29th March, until, in short, he felt that he could so strain and adapt actual facts as to make out a specious case in his own favour. It will naturally strike any reader that, for a general advancing with purely pacific intentions, Komaroff was very particular in reconnoitring and ascertaining the weakest point of the Afghan position. He states plainly that the Afghan left flank was "rather weak." And yet he would argue that the Afghans were not justified in strengthening the weak point of their position when the Russians threatened it with overwhelming numbers. If Komaroff had kept his 3000 Russians at Imam Baba, then the Afghans would have been contented to hold the left bank of the Khushk as heretofore. But when an attack was clearly imminent, they would have neglected their duty if they had not taken every step calculated to make their resistance as effectual as possible.

1. Komaroff, in his account of Captain Yate's first interview with Colonel Zakrchewski, says: "The English referred to the arrangement between the two Governments, and their difficult position in trying to preserve the *status quo* among the Saruks of Panjdeh in view of the danger of a Russo-Afghan collision." On the British side the conversation is thus reported: Captain Yate told Colonel Zakrchewski that there was danger of conflict if the Russian troops were allowed to come in direct contact with the Afghans, and he asked the Russians to assist him in preserving the *status quo* pending the result of the negoti-

ations, by preventing direct contact. Colonel Zakrchewski declined to promise any assistance of the sort.

2. Komaroff *says*: "*The English begged for a warning in* case a collision became inevitable." The truth is, that Colonel Zakrchewski was asked whether he recognised the peaceable character of the British Commission, and whether he intended to give the officers warning prior to attacking the Afghans. Colonel Zakrchewski in his reply denied any intention of attacking the Afghans; but while acknowledging the position of the British officers as representatives of a friendly Power, said that for military reasons warning of an intended attack *could not be given to them. He affected to regard the Af*ghans as savages with whom negotiation was out of the question. Nor would he admit the right of the British officers to negotiate on their behalf.

3. Komaroff says: "The Afghans continued to move their posts forward and on the Russian flank on the left bank of the Khushk, sending out daily numbers of cavalry and making fortifications." This is absolutely untrue, unless the posting of Afghan vedettes *vis-à-vis* to the Russian vedettes and *pickets, which had been pushed forward unnecessarily* near to the Afghan position, and the construction of some shelter-trenches by the Afghans close to Pul-i-khishti (Dash Kepri, *Russicè*), can be interpreted into acts worthy of such exaggerated terms. As the Afghan vedettes were posted on the 25th, the date of arrival of the Russian force, so they remained. They never advanced beyond the line then taken up.

4. Komaroff says he made "a reconnaissance on the 26th with five *jigits* under Captain Prassloff." The Af*ghans state that some Russians and Turkomans entered the* Afghan trenches on the right bank of the Murghab, and that one of the Russians pulled the beard of the Afghan officer in command. On this, as on other occasions of similar provocation, the Afghans showed great forbearance. They escorted the aggressors unharmed back to the neighbourhood of the Russian camp.

5. General Komaroff calls his insulting and provoking despatch of troops along the left bank of the Khushk and right

bank of the Murghab on the 27th, a "reconnaissance" and a "precaution." He adds: "The Afghans, in answer to this precaution, reinforced their posts on the right bank of the Murghab by two companies, which advanced to within 800 yards of our company and ordered our immediate withdrawal." This is a distinct misrepresentation. When the Naib Salar saw the Russians (one Russian company = 200 to 250 men) advancing along the right bank of the Murghab, he sent three companies across the river to reinforce the detachment intrenched there. When the Russians came near the Afghan intrenchments, the Naib Salar himself rode forward and threatened to open fire on them if they did not withdraw. The Russians withdrew, and not unnaturally the Afghans exulted over their bloodless victory.

6. As for capturing a Russian interpreter and detaining one of Komaroff's messengers, nothing is known about it, and such trumped-up charges are unworthy of attention. They are probably misrepresentations. If Komaroff's Turkoman interpreter had not been nearer the Afghan lines than he should have been, he would not have given the Afghans a chance of arresting him. He was probably hanging about the Afghan lines for no honest purpose.

7. Komaroff says: "Alikhanoff entered into friendly conversation with the commander of the Afghan left flank," &c. When General Ghaus-ud-din Khan, the Afghan commander referred to, heard that Colonel Alikhanoff, with a body of Turkoman horse, had ridden through the Afghan line of vedettes and gone away up the valley of the Khushk, he at once ordered out one or two squadrons of Kabuli horse and went in pursuit of him. When he overtook him, he found him preparing to drink tea. General Ghaus-ud-din used no violence, but he declined his invitation to drink tea, and the tone of his conversation was from all accounts the very reverse of friendly. In fact, as General Komaroff for once in a way accurately states, "he requested Colonel Alikhanoff to withdraw under threat of using arms." Considering that Alikhanoff had grossly insulted Ghaus-ud-din on the occasion of his first visit to Pul-i-khishti last November, it was

most improbable that the latter would engage in "friendly conversation" with him, far less let him ride with him "nearly to Dash Kepri"—*i.e.*, to the left of the Afghan position. There is barely one grain of truth in the whole of this statement, to which General Komaroff has appended his name.

8. Komaroff states that the Afghans turned both flanks of the Russian position. This is a mere exaggerative perversion of the truth. After the hostile demonstrations made by the Russians on the 27th, the Afghans placed a post of observation of some 15 men on the high ground on the right bank of the Murghab, to give timely warning of any repetition of such manœuvres. Does Komaroff call this outflanking his bivouac? As for his right flank, no Afghan ever went near it or in any way threatened it. There was no question of outflanking, nor indeed had the Afghans the faintest notion of attacking the Russians, as Komaroff says or implies they had. They knew they would have quite enough to do to hold their own when attacked. Indeed on this point Komaroff can be confuted out of his own words. He quotes and thereby gives his sanction to Colonel Zakrchewski's alleged statement to Captain Yate that, "if necessary, the Russians could annihilate the Afghans in a quarter of an hour." With regard to the position of the Afghan troops on and after the 26th there can be no doubt, as all the British officers are witnesses to the fact that they in no way threatened the security of the Russian position. As for any interchange of courtesies that may have passed between the Russian and Afghan vedettes and outposts, which were but a few yards apart, of these the British officers cannot be cognisant. Nor can they be regarded as a sufficient reason for precipitating a collision. If the Russians had pushed their vedettes less far forward, an interchange of compliments would have been impossible. Komaroff has exaggerated these chance remarks into "insulting messages."

9. We now come to what appears to have been the real motive that finally decided General Komaroff to bring matters to a crisis. He says: "Observing the ferment and even

diminution of respect among the Turkoman khans, elders and militia, I determined that it was necessary to put an end to this state of affairs." This admission entirely corroborates the reports received from the British officers at Panjdeh about the disaffection rife at this time among the Tekkes of Merv and the Saruks of Yulatan. It is believed that Komaroff, when he advanced on Panjdeh, left scarcely a Russian soldier in Merv and Yulatan. Seemingly he did not dare to split up his force. In fact the enterprise that he was engaged upon was a most hazardous one. It was a question of victory or a very serious disaster. For if mere seeming hesitation on the part of the Russian general sufficed to incite the Tekkes and Saruks to diminution of respect, what would have been the result of a repulse, or even of a retreat without fighting? It may have been that Komaroff at first did not intend to resort to arms, trusting to a rising among the Saruks of Panjdeh to give him a pretext for direct interference, or to oblige the Afghans and the British officers to retire. But when he found the latter firm and unyielding, and the Saruks, so far from sympathising with him, actually begging the British officers to be allowed to take the field against the Russians, and to crown all that, the Czar's Turkoman subjects were becoming openly disaffected and disrespectful, he was obliged to resort at once to extreme measures. It is impossible not to admire the promptitude and resolution with which General Komaroff acted in a position of considerable danger. There is no doubt that, situated as he was, he had no choice but to go ahead without delay and regardless of that preservation of decent appearances which the Russian Government would have preferred. The blame, however, lies with himself and with the Government that instructed him to advance. Had he respected the agreement of 16th March, and remained encamped at Merv or even at Imam Baba, he would not have found himself obliged to force on a collision. The responsibility rests with the man who, after the conclusion of the agreement in question, made the first forward move. General Komaroff deliberately and seemingly of malice prepense brought his troops face to face with the

Afghans. After such a move as that, any subsequent movements, whether on the Afghan or Russian side, fade into insignificance.

10. Komaroff says: "I still hoped for a peaceful agreement, and sent Colonel Zakrchewski to make an appointment with the English officers, advising the Afghan chiefs to be present." This second meeting took place solely at the instance and request of Captain Yate, who, after the unaccountable behaviour of the Russians on the 27th, wrote on the 28th and proposed an interview. The Russian ultimatum to the Naib Salar was received early on the morning of the 29th, whereas Colonel Zakrchewski's letter accepting the proposal for an interview was not received till later. It is now clear that General Komaroff had no desire or intention of trying to arrange matters otherwise than by force of arms. During the first interview of the 26th March the Russian officers are said to have advanced claims that could not for an instant be entertained, and during the second interview of the 29th they adopted a tone that left little opening for peaceful arrangement.

11. As for Komaroff's assertion that the Russian pickets had patrolled down to the Dash Kepri bridge on the 17th March, even if it were true, it furnishes no pretext for turning out the Afghans, who had previously occupied the left bank of the Khushk with a detachment. But Komaroff previously stated: "Up to the 30th not one of our outposts extended beyond the points already occupied by our militia in front of Kizil-tapa on the 17th." His statements contradict each other. Komaroff might also have pleaded that on the 20th February a Russian officer under Afghan escort had advanced as far as the Dash Kepri bridge and *counted the arches.*

12. Komaroff says: "Still wishing to arrange matters peaceably, I wrote a private note to Naib Salar." To the best of my knowledge—*i.e.*, not having seen the letter myself—General Komaroff's "private note" was couched in threatening and peremptory language. It offered no concessions on the Russian side, and demanded concessions such as

neither the British nor Afghan officers, consistently with the agreement of 17th March, could for a moment consent to.

13. Komaroff estimates the Afghans at 4000 strong. The Afghan force all told, regulars and irregulars, did not number 3000 men, and of these barely 1200 (all Afghans) were engaged. The irregulars, numbering some 1200, were not relied on for resisting a Russian attack.

14. There seems no ground for Komaroff's assertion that the Afghans expected to be attacked in rear by the Saruks. The latter, at any rate, although they flocked to the scene of the conflict, never attempted to molest the retreating Afghans. Most of the headmen of the Saruks remained in the British camp during the fight.

15. Komaroff says: "I was resolved not to begin the attack." Who begins an attack? Is it he who advances his troops to within 500 yards of an enemy's position, and there awaits the completion of his arrangements for the attack prior to a further advance; or is it the enemy who remains quietly in his position, and opens fire only when the intention to push the attack home is no longer doubtful?

16. In acknowledging the receipt of two letters from Captain Yate, General Komaroff not unnaturally omits to mention that Colonel Alikhanoff, as soon as the fight was over, entered the Afghan camp and assumed the functions of Governor of Panjdeh, issued repeated orders to his newly acquired subjects to attack the British camp, and even went so far as to offer rewards for their heads. Nor does General Komaroff allude to his own generous courtesy in sending Captain Yate a pair of General Ghaus-ud-din's boots with his compliments. As for any assistance sent to Captain Yate by Komaroff, its arrival was too tardy to be of the slightest use; and the Saruks, had they been minded to break at the instigation of Alikhanoff the ties of honour and hospitality, might have murdered the British officers fifty times over. The latter left Panjdeh, not, as Komaroff asserts, surrounded by Bengal cavalry and Afghan fugitives, but escorted by the two most influential headmen of Panjdeh, 10 sowars of the 11th Bengal Lancers, and accompanied by two wounded Afghans. The

only sign of General Komaroff's assistance was the appearance of a strange Turkoman or two in the vicinity of the camp just after it was evacuated.

17. Komaroff then goes on to state that the British officers directed the Saruks to furnish 1000 men, &c. This information he obtained from wounded Afghans. Now the Afghan camp was five miles from Panjdeh, and the intercourse between the Afghan troops and the Saruks was very limited; therefore Afghan evidence is untrustworthy. The truth is, that the Saruks repeatedly made the British officers offers of assistance, but all such offers were systematically declined. The Saruks were invariably directed to remain strictly neutral.

18. "On April 7th, General Komaroff wrote to Naib Salar that he had no further animosity against the Afghans." We must strive to value at its proper worth this proof of a forgiving spirit on the part of the victorious Russian. Victory makes us wondrous kind. I regret to say that the Afghans in no way reciprocate General Komaroff's amiable sentiments.

The most noticeable point in General Komaroff's report is his admission of the disaffection rife among the Turkomans under Russian rule. It proves how very true were the reports that reached the Commission in February and March about the anti-Russian feeling prevalent in Central Asia. I have heard that this feeling found expression not merely in words and rumours, but in black and white. We understand now why the Russian Government were apprehensive of the [illegible] of the British Commission. If 30 British officers and 500 native soldiers can light the spark of revolution, what would the presence of an army corps not do? An insurrection in Central Asia would be a strong weapon in the hands of the British Government. It is a weapon that the present Government has seen fit not to use. It would not act in unison with a policy that is bent on defending India on its own frontier. Nothing short of a British occupation of Herat could secure to England the co-operation of Persia and [illegible] and perhaps, too, of Afghanistan.

CHAPTER XII.

RESULTS OF THE COMMISSION.

To follow the Commission further on its march to the Russo-Afghan frontier, or to recapitulate its doings up to the 19th June, on which date I left it to return to India, is unnecessary. Nor do I intend to recount its history after that date. I leave that for the pens of eyewitnesses. I will first sum up briefly what the labours of the Commission have added to the scientific and military knowledge of the tracts it has visited, and then I will endeavour to show how the events in which the Commission has borne such a prominent part have influenced the Central Asian question.

Science, as represented with the Afghan Boundary Commission, may be divided into two branches—the military and the purely scientific; and each of its sections had a bearing on both these branches in a greater or less degree. For instance, in the Intelligence department the military branch exclusively predominated. The labours of the Survey are of the highest importance, both for military purposes and for the advancement of geographical knowledge. Geology and botany may seem at the first glance to have a solely scientific interest; but in so far as they deal with the mineral and agricultural resources of a country, and *ergo* with the industrial products—not to mention that the geological formation of a country has an important bearing on the conduct of military operations, especially engineering operations, therein — so geology and botany also have their value for military ends. Natural history and archæology are two additional branches

of science that were not uncultivated by certain members of the Commission.

To begin with the Intelligence department, it was represented by Captain Maitland, of the Bombay Staff Corps, and Captain Peacocke, R.E. Their first work was to explore the routes between Nushki and the Helmund. These routes are of great strategical importance—insomuch as a branch railway can be run, without any great difficulty, from the Kandahar line across the Beluch desert to the Helmund and Seistan. Throughout the march of the Commission to Kuhsan, both officers were diligently engaged in collecting all information possible of military import about the country traversed. During the winter of 1884-85 they explored most of the routes in Badkis, and the country from Maruchak on the Murghab to Kilif on the Oxus, including the khanates of Maimena, Andkhui, Akcha, and Shibargan. When, in the summer [illegible] autumn of 1885, explorations were recommenced, [illegible] *Maitland travelled from Herat through Obeh* and Daulatyar to Bamian, thence through the difficult passes of the Hindu Kush to Balkh, and back *viâ* Maimena to rejoin the Commission at Chahar Shamba in January. He was accompanied [illegible] out by Captain Hon. M. G. Talbot. An [illegible] and knowledge of these routes cannot be value [illegible] Captain Peacocke, in the meantime, was [illegible] superintending the improvement of the [illegible] and on the completion of that duty, [illegible] out the winter of 1885-86, and spring [illegible] make the surveys necessary for the [illegible] *tier from the Hari Rud to the* [illegible] of of the work that has been done [illegible] to the [illegible] gence branch with the Commi[illegible] have acquired an intimate [illegible] interest of the greater [illegible] istan. It is anticip[illegible] its demarcation la[illegible] mar, and will the[illegible] Khaiber Pass, an[illegible] of the Intellig[illegible]

party, and an important extension of our military kn
ledge of Afghanistan will be the result. We should also b
in mind the travels of Mr Ney Elias from Yarkand acr
the Pamir to join the Commission at Chahar Shamba, a
the expedition of Colonel Lockhart to Chitral, Kafirista
Dardistan, and Badakshan—both of which are intimate
connected with the movements of the Afghan Boundar
Commission.

The work of the Survey department included almost al
western and northern Afghanistan. But in addition to that, Captains Gore and Talbot surveyed Khorasan east and south-east of Mashhad. All the three officers of the Survey department—Major Holdich, Captain Gore, and Captain Hon. M. G. Talbot—being Royal Engineer officers, were members of the committee that reported on the defences of Herat and the measures necessary to place them in a satisfactory condition. Captains Maitland and Peacocke also formed part of this committee. The surveys required for the frontier demarcation were all executed by the three officers above mentioned and their subordinates, assisted by Captain Peacocke; and very hard work it was. For while the Russians could put seven complete survey parties into the field at once, Major Holdich was so short-handed that he could put two or three at most. Fortunately the British surveyors had made the most of their year's start; otherwise they could not possibly, during the past winter (1885-86), have kept pace with the Russian topographers. Major Holdich and his assistants have still important work before them on the return march to India.

Dr Aitchison, the naturalist and botanist of the expedition,
has taken to Kew a very valuable collection of botanical
pecimens amassed in western and northern Afghanistan
nd Persia. Of birds, beasts, and reptiles, too, he had col-
cted many specimens, but their destination I do not know.
believe that he will publish later on an instructive work
the products and manufactures of Persia and Afghanistan,
nilar to a work previously published by him, termed 'La-
h Products.'

Captain Griesbach's geological surveys of western and northern Afghanistan and eastern Khorasan are of great importance, as being an important contribution towards the completion of the geological survey of the terrestrial globe.

Archæology found its most energetic representative in Captain de Laessoe, who, among other discoveries, opened up an extensive series of ancient cave-dwellings in the valley of the Murghab near Panjdeh. I saw near Kalah-i-nau similar cave-dwellings, and others of less extent and less easily accessible were to be seen in various parts of the valley of the Murghab. There is no doubt that Badkis, and the *chul* between the Murghab and the Oxus, would yield valuable results to the excavator. Both at Gulran and Kalah-i-maur were seen the distinct traces of large towns, and I am told similar traces are to be seen east of the Murghab.[1]

After this brief *résumé* of the work of the scientific branches, I think I should say a few words of the labours of the officers of the Political department. On the march from Rindli to Kuhsan, they seemed to put their hands to any job that turned up. When the Commission settled down at Chahar Shamba, Mr Merk was sent off with Captain Peacocke to the Oxus; while early in February, Captain Yate accompanied Colonel Ridgeway to Panjdeh, and subsequently surveyed and reported on a considerable portion of Badkis, including the Nimaksar (salt-lakes). He then returned to Panjdeh, and was present there as the British representative when Komaroff forced on an engagement on the 30th March 1885. Meanwhile, Captain (now Major) Durand, during Colonel Ridgeway's absence, took charge of the political office. Among other duties allotted to the political officers was the preparation of reports on the Hazaras, Jamshidis, Taimuris, Firuzkuhis, Taimanis, and other tribes in the Herat district. During the slack period that followed the 30th March, the political officers were detached on various trips. Later on—*i.e.*, from July to October—when the

[1] Captains Durand and Talbot, Dr Owen, and others, interested themselves in collecting old coins and other antiques that were from time to time brought for sale.

strengthening of the fortifications of Herat was the burn
question of the moment, a political officer was detailed
accompany the Engineer officers on their visits to Herat, a
to furnish such reports and information as came within h
province. This duty was generally allotted to Captain Yat
About the same time, Mr Merk visited the country of th
Taimanis with Captain Talbot—a country that perhaps til
then no European, unless it be M. Ferrier, had traversed.
When the Zulfikar difficulty was finally settled and the Rus-
sian Commission ordered to assemble at Zulfikar, Major Dur-
and was nominated Assistant Commissioner. Since then, both
Sir Joseph Ridgeway and he have had enough to do to resist
Russian schemes of encroachment and inadmissible demands.

At the very time when the Commission was leaving India,
M. Vambéry thought fit to publish in the 'National Review'
a series of articles intended to demonstrate the futility of an
attempt to demarcate a Russo-Afghan frontier. In a letter
from Bala Murghab, dated 19th January 1885 (chap. vii.), I
endeavoured to expose the fallacy of his arguments; but the
strongest proof of their unsoundness is the fact that a frontier
has been demarcated from the Hari Rud to the Murghab, and
is in process of being settled between the Murghab and the
Oxus.

Before I pass on to a consideration of the present posi-
tion of England and Russia in Central Asia, I must say a
few words of the political conduct of the affairs of the Com-
nission while Sir Peter Lumsden was at its head. There is
o doubt that at the outset the recommendations made by
ir Peter Lumsden to Lord Granville were sound, and entirely
keeping with the Clarendon-Gortchakoff agreement of
72. That agreement drew the line of frontier roughly
m Sarakhs to Khwaja Salar on the Oxus. Consequently
occupation of Pul-i-Khatun by the Russians was a delib-
e infringement of that agreement, and Sir P. Lumsden
perfectly right in advising the Government to demand
vithdrawal of the Russian outpost at Pul-i-Khatun. If
emonstrance of the British Government was couched in
feeble terms as to encourage a curt refusal from the

Russian Government [illegible]
Commissioner. In [illegible]
in the House of Commons [illegible]
of Russian troops from [illegible]
which is seemingly a diplomatic [illegible]
It seems probable that Sir Peter Lumsden [illegible]
got some clue to [illegible]
Panjdeh made in November 188[illegible]
Sarakhs on [illegible] November [illegible]
24th started for Panjdeh. [illegible]
visit to Panjdeh [illegible]
end of November [illegible]
a fortnight [illegible]
was [illegible]
Afghan General [illegible]
actual occurrence of [illegible]
the forerunner of [illegible]
session of another [illegible]
been recognised as the basis for [illegible]
den's prompt visit to Panjdeh [illegible]
unfortunately the [illegible]
which [illegible]
the British Commissioner and the [illegible]
rially diminished the [illegible]
from the first [illegible]
Saad-ud-din, [illegible]
jects of every [illegible]
Government were [illegible]
the British Government [illegible]
susceptibilities, to a [illegible]
only to a certain [illegible]
pressure was brought [illegible]
suspend his [illegible]
Ridgeway found that the [illegible]
him (solely from fear of the [illegible]
of the Commission at [illegible]
check intercourse between the [illegible]
he rode on the 18th February [illegible]

obtained from the Kazi a written permit for all Saruks visit the British camp at Panjdeh *ad libitum.*

All evidence goes to prove that the attitude of the Britis Government in connection with the demarcation of the Afghar frontier was from the first weak and indecisive. The Russian Government asserted that it had advocated the preliminary settlement of the main features of the frontier by the two Cabinets, and the incorrectness of this assertion has never been proved. If it was correct, then the despatch of the British Commission, before a clear understanding was arrived at, was a palpable error, and gave the Russian Government a handle which they have manipulated only too ably for their own advantage.

It now remains to give a brief review of the alterations that have taken place in the relations of England and Russia in Central Asia since November 1884, when the British Commission reached Herat. I am not going to discuss the question whether or not Russia had any solid grounds for disputing the Afghan claim to Badkis and Panjdeh. I am myself firmly convinced that the Afghan claim was a perfectly legitimate one, and that the success of Russia is due to the more determined policy and able diplomacy of the Czar and his ministers. The grounds for the Afghan claim are fully detailed in the letters now republished. Had the British Government accepted in 1882 the proposal of the Russian Govern-nent to assemble a joint Commission for the demarcation of he Russo-Afghan frontier, it seems highly probable that then, hen Merv had not yet fallen into the hands of the Russians, more advantageous frontier would have been secured for the ritories of our ally the Amir. It is understood that diplotic agents deputed by the British and Indian Governments tudy the state of affairs in Central Asia, advocated an early lement of the frontier question; but the Cabinet in Down-Street appears to have turned a deaf ear to their advice. ever, what we have now to reckon with is the actual state fairs. To Russia has been conceded the line of frontier een the Hari Rud and the Murghab which I have already d, and it seems perfectly certain that the frontier from

the Murghab to the Oxus will, when settled, border on, if it does not actually encroach upon, the pasture-lands of the khanates of Maimena and Andkhui and the [illegible] on the left bank of the Oxus, between Khwaja Salar and Kilif.

Considering that the aim and end of British diplomacy has—always, of course, with a view to safeguarding India—been the security of Herat from Russian and Persian aggression, I cannot do better than say a few words about the present condition of the capital of the western Afghan province. At the conference between the Viceroy and the Amir at Rawalpindi in March-April 1885, it was decided that the military protection of Herat should be left entirely in the hands of the Afghans, British assistance being limited for the time to a grant of money for the improvement of the fortifications and the supply of war material consisting of breech-loading rifles, guns, ammunition, &c. The Engineer officers with the Boundary Commission were able to give the Afghans valuable advice as to the measures necessary to render Herat capable of holding out for some time against modern siege-operations, and they also supervised the execution of the measures they recommended. I do not intend here to enter into any details about the fortifications of Herat. Suffice it to say that enough has been done to secure it from being carried by a *coup de main*. The duration of a siege of Herat will depend on many contingencies—the unity of the defenders and the energy and ability of their generals, the activity of the besiegers, the attitude of the surrounding tribes [illegible], whether actively hostile to the besiegers or passively neutral, and lastly, on the policy of Persia. In their present condition Herat and its valley are not of the value [illegible] to them. The neighbourhood of Herat is now to a great extent denuded of inhabitants and a great part of the soil of its fertile valley lies uncultivated. It has been estimated lately that the population of Herat city does not now exceed 12,000; and of the entire valley, which is some 60 miles long by 20 broad, 50,000. To suppose that the Herat valley could, in its present condition, support a Russian army powerful enough to advance to attack with a certainty of success (for

Russia could not afford to risk defeat), the army that Ind
would mass on the Helmund, or some other point in advan
of Kandahar, is a mistake. Possibly 20,000 or 30,000 me
could now be supported on the produce of the Herat an
Ghorian valleys, with the assistance of the supplies tha
would be brought up by the trans-Caspian Railway. To
render Herat a really valuable base, whence an advance
can be made on India, it must be carefully administered by
Russia for a good many years. The population must be
increased by immigration, the whole valley must be irrigated
and tilled, and the trade and manufactures developed. It
must be restored to something approaching its pristine splendour; and possibly, under the altered conditions of modern
Asia (the steamer, not the caravan, is now the medium of commerce), this may prove impossible. As far as the prospect of
a Russian invasion of India is concerned, the shortcomings of
Herat, or any other base of military operations in Central
Asia, will be more or less compensated by the completion of
the trans-Caspian and Turkistan Railway. Any one who
has studied the geographical conformation of northern Afghanistan must clearly perceive that the easiest avenue to
India is *viâ* Herat and Kandahar. North of Herat, and west
of it to the Hari Rud, stretches a low range of mountains
pierced by a succession of easy passes. The concentration of
an army on Herat from the north and west, especially with a
railway behind to facilitate the conveyance of troops and supplies to the theatre of war, is a matter of no difficulty for a
ation that commands all its main avenues of approach—viz.,
om Mashhad on the west, and *viâ* the Hari Rud and the
hushk valleys on the north. But eastward from Herat to
e frontiers of Kashmir, there extends an almost impene-
ble barrier of mountains. Certainly there are passes over
m; but all travellers (Yavorski is the latest, and apparently
most accurate and reliable) agree as to their great difficulty.
winter these passes are, according to Yavorski, blocked
now, usually from December to March, although in mild
s they are sometimes open for a few days during those
hs. Such an intricate country should be capable of

effective defence against an invader. It follows from this, that the route most likely to be adopted by an invader of India would be that *viâ* Herat and Kandahar, and it is doubtless this consideration that has led the Government of India to concentrate most of its energies and resources on the defence of the Kandahar line.[1] As is known, two lines of railway are now being constructed from the plains of Upper Sind to the Pishin valley. The one *viâ* the Bolan to Quetta is practically completed. In its present state it is liable at any time to be swept away in parts by a flood; but adequate provision has been made on the spot for the rapid repairs of any such damage. It is the portion of the line below Mach that is liable to be swept away; and recently a much more eligible route for a railway from Sibi to Quetta has been discovered and surveyed through the hills to the east of the Bolan Pass. As soon as the Government of India is pecuniarily less embarrassed than it appears to be at this moment, we may hope to see the railway line transferred from the bed of the Bolan stream to the more eligible route above mentioned. Of the value of railway communication between the Sind plain and the Pishin plateau, the difficulty experienced in sending up reinforcements to Quetta in August 1880, and the sad results of the prevalence of cholera on the Bolan and Hurnai routes in the summer of 1885, are conclusive evidence, not to mention the insuperable difficulties attending the provision of sufficient transport for the conveyance of the baggage and supplies of a large army advancing from India to Kandahar.

It would appear that the future *rôle* intended to be played by Herat is simply to delay the advance of a Russian force long enough to give an Anglo-Indian army time to assemble on the line considered most suitable for the defence of India. Unsupported, Herat must fall; but in the meantime, thanks to the guns and rifles lately presented to the Amir, and a few lakhs of rupees expended on the fortifications, the army, to which the security of India is intrusted, will have been placed

[1] The same reason, no doubt, has led Russia to construct a line of railway by which troops can be concentrated at Merv and Sarakhs with [illegible] and Turkistan.

in the field. The strengthening of Herat is not the only measure that the Amir has taken. He has seen the necessity of linking Kabul to Balkh and Herat by good roads, and for a year past impressed labour has been employed to improve the road from Kabul to Herat through the Hazarajat. The garrisons of Afghan Turkistan have also been strengthened. The next concession we require from the Amir is his consent to the continuation of the railways from Peshawar to Kabul, and from Pishin to Kandahar, and the construction of telegraph lines between the Indian frontier and Kabul and Kandahar, and between Kabul and Kandahar *viâ* Ghazni. The means of rapid communication thus afforded to Anglo-Indian armies operating on far-distant portions of the frontier, would be invaluable. It is not enough for India that it is quite as much prepared to resist as Russia is to attack. What is wanted are facilities for defence far superior to those for the attack. In adopting measures of defence it is difficult to err on the side of excess. India cannot be too secure. It is very unfortunate that financial difficulties are putting a stop to the increase of the Sikh and Goorkha regiments, and also probably to other items of the programme of defence. True that a loan of six millions is now being negotiated by the Government of India, and it may be far worse spent than on the completion of the army of India and its armament. It could be wished that the Volunteer service in India was more efficient, but the difficulties of remedying its defects are many. It is now proposed to form a Railway Service Corps on the North-Western Railway—*i.e.*, the railway that runs from Delhi to Lahore, and thence branches to Peshawar, Karachi, and the Pishin. Such a corps will probably be composed not only of railway officials, but also of selected men from the native army reserves. The changes that have been actually introduced into the army of India during the past twelve months consist chiefly of augmentations of the establishment. It has been decided to increase the British garrison of India by 10,000 men in all, by sending out several additional battalions of infantry and batteries of artillery, and adding a squadron to each regiment of cavalry. In the native army five additional

battalions of Goorkhas and several Sikh regiments were to have been raised. So far, however, only three battalions of Goorkhas have been raised, while an additional squadron has been added to each native cavalry regiment. Most of the cavalry regiments that were disbanded in 1882 have again been raised—viz., two in Bengal and one in Bombay. The strength of Goorkha battalions has been raised to 1000 rank and file.

Most of the above alterations and reforms — both those projected and those carried into effect—are the outcome of the Anglo-Russian disagreement of the spring of 1885. The then imminence of war gave a stimulus to military preparations such as years of comparative peace and immunity from danger had failed to awaken. It is true that in 1875 the Russians threatened India through Afghanistan; but Geok-tepe, Ashkabad, and Merv had not then fallen into Russia's hands, and no trans-Caspian railway existed.

And now, having glanced at what is being done in India, let us see what the Russians are about in Central Asia. To obtain any reliable statistics of the strength of the Russian forces in trans-Caspiana and Turkistan is difficult; but from a comparison of the most recent reports that have come to my notice, I should say that 15,000 for trans-Caspiana (including about 1000 local levies), and 30,000 for Turkistan (of whom 3000 are local levies), would be not far off the mark. The component parts of these totals may be roughly estimated as follows: In Turkistan, 23,000 regular infantry, four or five batteries of artillery (about 30 guns), 3500 Cossacks, and 3000 local levies; in trans-Caspiana, 10,000 regular infantry (including two railway battalions working on the trans-Caspian railway), 3000 Cossacks, two or three batteries artillery (12 to 20 guns), about 600 infantry and 400 cavalry local levies (Turkomans). *Apropos* of these trans-Caspian local levies, it may be mentioned that fully a year ago M. Vambéry gave to the world a very exaggerated statement of the progress made by the Russians in organising the Turkoman Irregular Horse, whereas up to the present moment they have barely succeeded in raising two squadrons. But

after all, M. Vambéry's travels were but limited in extent, twenty-two years have elapsed since he wandered in the g of a dervish to Khiva, Bokhara, and Herat. But to rev to the Russian garrison of the trans-Caspian province. T headquarters is located at Ashkabad, a place that fell in the hands of Russia at the close of General Skoboleff's cam paign against the Akhal Tekkes in the winter of 1880-81 Under Russian rule it has developed from a Turkoman village into an administrative and military centre. Here resides General Komaroff, the governor and commander-in-chief of the forces in trans-Caspiana. The next most important place in the province is Merv, which is governed by Colonel Alikhanoff. In this district is included Panjdeh, and all or most of the territory that Afghanistan has recently ceded to Russia. The largest garrisons are located at Ashkabad, Sarakhs, and Merv: and bodies of troops are quartered at Krasnovodsk, Mikhailovsk, and Chikishlar, on the east shore of the Caspian; at Kahka, Du-shakh, Chacha, and Karaband, on the main road from Ashkabad to Sarakhs and Merv; and at Pul-i-Khatun, Ak-rabat, Chaman-i-bed, and Panjdeh, near the recently demarcated frontier. The telegraph line was completed to Merv and Sarakhs last year, and if it has not already been constructed to and beyond the Oxus, will certainly be laid as the railway advances. The enlistment of local levies (Turkomans) does not seem to have been attended so far with much success. Still, we have no proof that the Russians desire to enrol more than they have at present—viz., about 400 horse and 600 infantry.

But it is not so much the present strength of the Russian garrisons in Central Asia that concerns us, as the means that Power possesses of massing troops on the northern frontier of Afghanistan to menace and invade India. Those means at the resent moment consist, firstly, of a single line of railway, hich is now (May 1886) completed from the harbour of Mikilovsk on the east shore of the Caspian, to Kahka, a village out half-way along the main road from Ashkabad to Sarakhs. year ago the terminus was at Kizil-Arvat, 145 miles from khailovsk. On Christmas-day 1885, the first passenger

train ran to Ashkabad, 136 miles farther; and by this time (for five months have elapsed since it reached Ashkabad) Kahka, 375 miles from Mikhailovsk, is not improbably the terminus. At the same time, work is being carried on on the Kahka-Merv and Merv-Charjui sections. It is anticipated that the line will be completed to Merv before the end of this year, and by June 1887 we may expect it to be completed to Charjui on the Oxus. It is true that a sanguine Russian paper has stated that the line would be open to Merv in April and to Charjui in June 1886; but that statement is not worth the paper it is printed on. From Ashkabad to Charjui is *about 380 miles, and to lay a mile of line a-day is uncommon* good work on the most favourable ground (the Ruk-Sibi line was laid at the rate of a mile a-day, but the work was rough and of a temporary nature). In trans-Caspiana the scarcity of water is a most serious hindrance; and moreover, a good deal of bridging is required. The progress of the Turkistan section of the line depends on whether work is at once begun independently at that end, or whether its commencement is postponed until the completion of the line from the Caspian to the Oxus. It is proposed to convey the train across the Oxus on a steam-ferry. The distance from Charjui *viâ* Bokhara to Samarcand is about 230 miles. The line once completed to Samarcand, we may look upon its extension to Tashkend, the seat of government in Turkistan, as a mere question of time. Certain writers in the Russian press have of late maintained that the extension of the railway beyond Merv is for strategical purposes useless, and that commercial prospects are not sufficiently promising to warrant the construction of a railway to Bokhara, Samarcand, and Tashkend. Nevertheless it is authoritatively reported that General Annenkoff has obtained the sanction of his Government to this extension, and recent articles in the 'Journal de St Petersbourg' seem to imply that the commercial advantages resulting from it will be considerable. As far as the strategical part of the question is concerned, this opinion appears to be not without foundation. The garrison of Turkistan is, as stated above, about 30,000 strong; and of this number, at least half,

I should say, are indispensable for controlling the inhabita
In the event of an invasion of Afghanistan, we may take it granted that a Russian army will occupy Balkh and all khanates of Afghan Turkistan. It seems most natural th this task should be allotted to the army of Turkistan. It is course quite possible to detach a force from the trans-Caspia army *viâ* Bala-Murghab and Maimena or Balkh. It is per haps still more probable that two forces—one advancing from Bokhara or Samarcand, and the other from Merv through Panjdeh—will co-operate in the reduction of the Afghan khanates, and the expulsion of the Afghan army beyond the Hindu Kush. At all events, it would seem that Turkistan will have few or no troops to spare for operations against Herat; nor is there any need for the trans-Caspian army, with all the resources of the Caucasus and Russia at its back, to look to Turkistan for aid. At the same time, in the event of an emergency, it will be a great advantage to be able to reinforce Turkistan from trans-Caspiana, or *vice versâ*, as circumstances may require, not to mention the convenience of rapid communication with Tashkend and the stimulus it should lend to commercial advancement. Anyhow, the Russian Government has, it is reported, decided to prolong the line beyond the Oxus. We may any day hear that branch lines are about to be run to Sarakhs and Panjdeh, or even to Kara-tapa on the Khushk, some 60 miles north of Herat.

The next point to be considered in connection with the Russian advance in Central Asia, is the harbour accommodation of the east coast of the Caspian. I travelled along this coast towards the end of last July in the Russian mail-boat. We called in at Chikishlar, which is nothing but a shelterless oadstead; and Krasnovodsk, a well-sheltered and commodious arbour. Steamers can be moored alongside the pier quite ose to the shore, so deep is the water. But in the approaches to Mikhailovsk, on the other hand, so shallow is the ter that no steamers of any draught can navigate them. e cargo has to be transferred to flats, and so transported the shallow channels that lead to the site of the railway inus. This is a very serious drawback, and several plans

for rectifying it have been proposed, one being the wholesale transfer of the railway terminus to Krasnovodsk, which, however, would be a very expensive undertaking, owing to engineering difficulties; and the other, the deepening of the approaches to Mikhailovsk. But this latter proposal is hardly likely to be a success, because the approaches would again very soon be choked by the drift-sand from the desert. At any rate, incessant dredging would be obligatory. There is, however, a third project, and one that promises more satisfactory results than either of the two first-named. When in the Caucasus last August, I was informed that an eligible harbour of sufficient depth to admit any of the Caspian steamers had been discovered on the south shore of the Balkan Bay, *vis-à-vis* to Krasnovodsk, and within 20 or 30 miles of Mikhailovsk. It is said that the railway terminus can easily be removed from Mikhailovsk to the site of this newly discovered harbour.

Communications between Russia and its trans-Caspian province are at present by no means perfect. The line to Charjui will probably not be completed till June 1887, and the line from Vladikavkas cannot be completed till the end of 1888 at the earliest. Now the Bolan railway is already completed, and the Sind-Pishin line is timed to be finished in the summer of 1887. Once the Khwaja Amran range is passed (it is reported that a tunnel will be constructed through that range), the railway can be pushed on to Kandahar in at most six months, and probably much less. If, therefore, the Indian line of defence is to be, as seems probable, on or near the Helmund, it is evident that, as far as railways are concerned, India is better prepared for defence than Russia for invasion. If, however, it be a question of preoccupying Herat, then, to the best of my judgment, the advantage rests entirely with Russia. But as I have said before, I very much doubt if, in the event of war with Russia, any Anglo-Indian force will be sent to Herat. There are other means of forcing Russia to evacuate Herat, if she succeeds in obtaining possession of it, besides a direct attack from India.

If adequate measures are taken for the defence of India, i Government and people have little or nothing to fear from Russian invasion. Russia is separated from India by 150 miles of bleak mountain-ranges and barren steppes, studde here and there with oases, and sparsely populated. From such a country she cannot draw the supplies and transport neces- sary for the support and movement of a force large enough to invade India with a reasonable chance of success. It should be our policy so to win the friendship of Afghanistan and Persia as to render their alliance sure and prevent Russia from obtaining the smallest assistance from them, either in troops, supplies, or transport. At the lowest computation Russia will require an army of 200,000 men to invade India, and for this force all the supplies and transport that cannot be raised locally must be brought from Russia. In a few years, no doubt, we shall see the trans-Caspian railway com- pleted to Sarakhs and Panjdeh, if not to Ak-rabat and Chaman-i-bed. But that still leaves them 400 odd miles to march to the Helmund. If we have played our cards well, they will be confronted at the outset by the fortress of Herat, which they must either capture or mask. I must admit that I see only too good grounds for apprehending that the Afghan garrison of Herat, knowing that the Amir's army is power- less to aid them and raise a siege, and that the army of India will not advance beyond the Helmund, and surrounded by disaffected tribes of Persian origin, will make but a half- hearted defence. If, however, an Anglo-Indian army advances o the Helmund, that will set free the garrison of Kandahar; nd that, combined with the Afghan garrisons of Girishk, arah, and Sabzawar, and supplemented by large bodies of irreg- lar levies drawn from every Afghan tribe between Herat and e Khwaja Amran range, might do much to delay the progress the siege operations, though I fear they could not prevent eir ultimate success. At the same time, if we have secured alliance of Persia, the troops, and especially the irregular alry of that nation, might be very useful in creating diver- s along the lengthy line of Russian communications from at to the Caspian. Supposing, however, that Herat falls,

and a Russian army 100,000 strong advances on Kandahar, the most arduous portion of its task is but just beginning. It remains to be proved if they can collect transport for the movement of a force of 100,000 men, and if they can feed such a large force. In the Afghan campaigns from 1878-80, the largest British force in the field was about 60,000 men; and with all the resources of India, with its 250 millions of inhabitants, at Government's disposal, it was no easy matter to provide an army even of that size with transport. How then is Russia, with nothing but semi-sterile steppes, with some half-dozen millions of settlers to draw upon, to transport 100,000 men from Herat to the Helmund? And even if they obtain transport, will not the Afghans destroy or remove all the supplies as they fall back on the British army on the Helmund? If they do not, they ought to. Moreover, as the Russian force advances, the dangers of a defeat multiply. I believe that a Russian force repulsed from before Herat would have a very troublous time of it. The first Russian reverse would encourage Afghan, Persian, and Turkoman alike; there might even be a general revolt throughout Turkistan and trans-Caspiana. And the nearer the Russian army was to the Helmund when defeated, the greater the probability of its total destruction. Pressed on during its retreat by the British army, harassed by thousands of Afghan guerillas, and its rear threatened by Persians and rebel Turkomans, its position would be a most unenviable one. Of course Herat-Kandahar is not the only line by which Russia can invade India. There is also the Balkh-Bamian route, and that from Herat through the Hazarajat on Kabul. But both of these routes are difficult, are blocked by snow for at least four months every year, and are unfitted for the secure retreat of a defeated army.

In concluding this review of the work of the Afghan Boundary Commission, and of the consequent relative positions of Russia and England in Asia, a few words should be said on the Central Asian policy of the Government from which the Commission originated. There is a motto, "better late than never," and I consider that the despatch of this Com-

tral Asia, but as a means of maintaining party prestige. It subsequently transpired that the Russian Cabinet had added to the agreement a proviso that practically left its hands free for any sort of aggressive action. That provisional paragraph was kept in the background. As a natural consequence, the British Commissioner, and in particular the British officer deputed to maintain British interests at Panjdeh, was entirely in the dark as to the real policy of the Government then in power. The agreement, as made public, distinctly stipulated that neither the Russian nor Afghan troops should advance. In defiance of that, General Komaroff advanced with a force 3000 strong and forced a combat on the Afghans. In consequence of the governmental attitude, blame has been attached to the British officer at Panjdeh, who, cognisant only of the agreement of the 16th March, considered that it was his duty and that of the Afghan troops to resist Russian aggression. The truth is, that blame attaches solely to the Liberal Government then in power, for its tortuous and unstraightforward policy. As a matter of fact, there is every reason to believe that the collision of Panjdeh on 30th March 1885 was the best thing that, under the circumstances, could happen. It brought matters to a crisis, and placed an effectual check on Russian aggressive projects. It roused British feeling to a pitch that warned Russia to go no further. I have been informed by Russian officers that General Komaroff made a mistake in not pressing on straight from Panjdeh on Herat. Such remarks, however, can only be regarded as ill-considered. An advance on Herat must have necessitated war; and as Russia was then unprepared for an advance on India, Komaroff did well to halt at Panjdeh. The Afghan feeling was very bitter against Russia. The memory of the Stolietoff Mission of 1878, and the complete failure of the Russians to give to the Amir Sher Ali Khan that assistance against the British Power that General Kaufmann had led him to expect, has not yet faded from the minds of the Afghan people. There is little doubt that had war broken out between Russia and England in the spring of 1885, a Russian invasion of Afghanistan would have met

with a strenuous resistance. The trans-Caspian railway w then only completed to Kizil-Arvat; and any one who kno the country between Kizil-Arvat and Herat, knows th without a railway the concentration of a sufficiently powerfu Russian force at Herat for the conquest of Afghanistan an the invasion of India is impossible. Knowing this, we can only feel surprise that more vigorous support was not accorded to the British Commission by the Government that sent it to Central Asia to guard the interests of Afghanistan and of our Indian empire. But not only did the Gladstonian Cabinet not support its Commission against Russian aggression, but it did not even make any effort to vindicate its conduct in the eyes of the British nation. The fact is, that no vindication of the deeds of the Commission could possibly have redounded to the credit of the Government, and therefore recourse was had to silence—a silence that could not be but unfavourably interpreted. While the Czar and all Russia were patting Komaroff on the back, the Government that then ruled England never uttered one word of praise or encouragement on behalf of the Commission that it had planted in Central Asia. Fortunately, in June 1885 a Conservative Ministry came into power, and promptly gave the Commission that active and resolute support which Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville had denied it. The new Ministry was of course obliged to continue the negotiations on the basis already laid down by the old one. It was too late to save Panjdeh and to push back the Russian outposts from the ertile border of southern Badkis into the waterless *chul.* he only thing possible to do was to concede to Russia as ttle as possible. The Zulfikar Pass was preserved to the mir; and a study of the map attached to this book will w that Russia has obtained very much less than she med, albeit she has most undeniably obtained by far the of it.

hile regarding Russian progress in Asia as antagonistic dangerous to British interests, we should at the same not altogether ignore its civilising effects. And while lering the work of civilisation that England and Russia

are carrying out in Asia, let us look back for a moment and recall the fact that those races that are now teaching to the Mongol and Aryan of Asia the arts and customs of Europe, were not many centuries ago even greater barbarians than the peoples they are now regenerating. The Russians, in particular, have only emerged from barbarism for the last two centuries, since the accession of Peter the Great, or at the earliest since the regency of Sophia, his elder sister. Much of the modern civilisation of Europe is due to the invasions of the Asiastic hordes, and to the influence of the Turks and Arabs. We now see the current of migration reversed, and tending eastward. We see Russia and England each arming the Asiatic races under their rule with the best firearms of modern times. Both alike seek to turn those conquered races into useful mercenaries, and to utilise them either for offence or defence. It becomes, however, a question whether in the long-run the subject-races may not turn the tables on the conquerors, and turn against them with fatal effect the very firearms they presented to them. The British nation has not yet forgotten the Mutiny of 1857-58; and in the late Afghan war the Afghan troops used against us the very rifles that the Viceroys of India had presented to Amir Sher Ali. Many signs indicate the growth and extension of native influence and power in India; and although the concessions that have been made to the natives of India are confined entirely to civil privileges, the daily increasing share in the government of the country that is being accorded to them must necessarily lessen the thoroughness of British domination. The policy of admitting the natives of India to a participation in the government is one of uncertain result. It may be, as some say, that it gives them a direct interest in the stability of the British rule; but on the other hand, it places them in a position to exercise their power and influence for the subversion of that rule. As for Russian rule over the Tartars, Uzbeks, and Turkomans, it is but of short duration, and the very nature of the country renders any combination against the Muscovite domination difficult. At the same time, both Briton and Russian may remember

that the history of the past teaches us that the tide of human civilisation and progress ebbs and flows, and that no one can foretell when it may take a westward turn.

I am personally quite convinced that the Russian Government will overstep the demarcated frontier at the first opportunity. Every care has been taken by the British Commission, by conceding to Russia the heads of water-supply, and indeed making any reasonable concessions, to avoid disputes hereafter. But to leave no loophole for a watchful foe ever on the *qui vive* to seize any opening, is obviously impossible. Disputes must arise, and the nature of their settlement will mainly depend on the policy of the British Government. If the weak spirit of concession that has been evinced for the past two years is adhered to, then of course Russia will have its own way, and little by little filch from the Amir the little territory that is still left to him north of the Hindu Kush. It is indeed strange that the Government of England, the power of which in Southern Asia is firmly established, should find itself unable to present a resolute front to the unstable and precarious position held by Russia in Central Asia. Yet so it is. Indeed from past events the world and the nationalities of Central Asia must conclude that Russia has the stronger position of the two in Asia. And yet such is not the case. It is most clearly a false policy to send a Commission to the north of Afghanistan for the purpose of conceding Afghan territory to Russia. It was the fiat of the Seistan Boundary Commission that decided the wavering mind of Sher Ali to seek a Russian alliance, and it can scarcely be expected that the Amir Abdur Rahman will conceive increased respect and regard for us if our Commission curtails the limits of his dominions. The latest report says that a frontier has been settled as far as the Andkhui territory, but it seems more than doubtful if the settlement will satisfy the Amir. He may dissemble his dissatisfaction. It were almost better for us to have left to Russia the *onus* of robbing Afghanistan of its territory, than take on ourselves the *onus* of conceding it to Russia.

CHAPTER XIII.

MILITARY STRENGTH OF PERSIA AND AFGHANISTAN.

While treating of the respective positions of England and Russia in Asia from a military point of view, it is scarcely possible to overlook the military strength of Persia and Afghanistan, two countries which must of necessity be intimately connected with the impending struggle. I can find no later or more authoritative information on this point than that contained in a series of articles entitled "La Russie et l'Angleterre en Asie Centrale," based on or translated from an article written by M. Lessar, and published in the 'Journal des Sciences Militaires.' The following is a *résumé* from the article (Part V.) in the number for March 1886:—

"The Persian army, according to the official documents to which we have had access, shows an effective total of 105,000 men, mainly composed as under: artillery, 5000; infantry, 53,000; cavalry, regular and irregular, 31,000; militia, 7200. These numbers, however, in reality exist only on paper. According to a firman issued by the Shah in July 1875, the Persian army was to be recruited according to a regular system, and to be maintained at a fixed peace-strength. Service for life was to be replaced by a period of obligatory service of twelve years' duration. This firman has never been carried into effect. Christians, Jews, and Guebres are excused from military service.

"Abbas Mirza first, in 1823, endeavoured to introduce into the Persian army some system of organisation; but it was the present Shah, Nasr-ud-din, who formed the idea of organising his army on the European system, and employing German and Aus-

trian instructors. The task of carrying into effect this idea was intrusted to his Prime Minister, Mirza Takki Khan, and subsequently to half-a-dozen other successive Ministers of War. The chief difficulties with which these ministers have had to contend are the poverty of the treasury, the peculations of the officers charged with the payment of the troops, and the consequent impossibility of ensuring to the troops the receipt of the pay due to them. Within the last few years the Shah has placed the entire control and management of the army in the hands of his third son, entitled Naib-us-sultana, but with no very satisfactory results. The native officers are incapable, and ignorant of the duties of their profession, while the European instructors have never yet succeeded in exercising any real authority over either officers or men. And yet the Persian foot-soldier, if well drilled and disciplined, and led by good officers, has all the qualities that go to make a first-rate soldier. Badly fed and cared for as he is, his powers of enduring fatigue are astounding."

The writer then mentions the several grades of officers and non-commissioned officers in the Persian army, and maintains that the higher the grade the lower the standard of morality. I have reason, however, to believe that there are not a few honourable exceptions to this general rule. The writer omits to remark that there are two distinct classes of Persian officers—one composed of the nobility, who early rise to comparatively high rank, and the other of men of lowly origin, who by interest or ability attain to the commissioned grade, and rarely rise above the rank of captain (*sultan*) or major (*yāwar*). Whatever the moral character of the lower class of officers, I can from personal experience say that *some* at least of the officers of good family are far from neglectful of the efficiency of the corps under their command—corps which are often recruited and officered from their own tribes and families.

After stating that the establishment of a Persian infantry regiment consists of 33 officers, 40 non-commissioned officers, and 700 rank and file, the writer continues:—

"Although the Persian Government has of late years bought up a large number of modern guns and firearms, and has established at Teheran a gun and small-arm factory, its armaments cannot be regarded as in a satisfactory condition.

"The regular cavalry consists only of the Shah's body-guard and three squadrons. The remaining 79 regiments of cavalry are all irregular, and composed of nomads[1] commanded by their own chiefs. This irregular cavalry is the most efficient portion of the Persian army, and the only one capable of doing really good service in time of war.

"The artillery is supposed to consist of 20 regiments of three or four batteries each, and each battery of from four to eight guns.

"There is one battalion of engineers 500 strong, and a police force of 24 battalions, with an effective of from 200 to 500 men per battalion."

The writer then makes mention of the *tufangchis*, whom he terms militia, mounted and dismounted. From my own personal experience, I may say that the *tufangchis* are quite useless for military purposes, as they are only armed with superannuated muskets, and have no discipline or organisation. As internal police they may be of some little use; but from all I heard and saw during my travels in Persia in 1884 and 1885, I came to the conclusion that they seldom received any pay, and that they were consequently obliged to eke out their livelihood by begging or extorting contributions from travellers—and that not unfrequently they had a distinct understanding, conducing to their own pecuniary advantage, with the gangs of highway robbers from whom they are supposed to protect wayfarers.

I am able from personal knowledge to endorse two of the writer's statements—viz., that the Persian infantry possesses sterling soldiering qualities, and that the Persian irregular cavalry is capable of doing excellent service. In the days of Abbas Mirza, British officers held those posts in the Persian army which of late years have been filled by officers of the Austrian, Russian, German, and other European armies. Since the peace of Turkomanchai in 1828, no British officers have, to the best of my knowledge, served in the Shah's army. Whether, with a view to the existing state of Central Asian affairs, the interests of the British empire have gained any-

[1] The writer is quite wrong in using the word "nomad." [illegible] tribes with [illegible], the Persian irregular cavalry have [illegible]

thing by this elimination of British influence from Per and the Persian army, is matter for grave doubt. It is b natural that the presence and influence of British office should strengthen the strong leaning towards a Britis alliance, as a safeguard against Russian aggression, tha undoubtedly animates very many Persians of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest.

Having recourse to a quite independent, and I think more reliable, though less recent authority than the 'Journal des Sciences Militaires,' we gather the following facts relative to the strength and condition of the Persian army. Its nominal strength is put down as 64,500 infantry, 4500 drilled cavalry, 20,000 undrilled cavalry, 5300 artillery, 90 camel artillery, 100 engineers, and 6550 militia, giving a total of 101,040. The actual strength is said to be: 35,400 infantry, 3300 drilled cavalry, 12,130 undrilled cavalry, 2500 artillery, 90 camel artillery, 100 engineers, and 1310 militia, giving a total of 54,830. Of this last-named number, only 24,500 men are said to be present with the colours, the remainder being on furlough at their own homes.

The Persian army, as it now is, has been organised—so far as it is organised—the infantry, artillery, and engineers by Austrian and Italian officers, and the cavalry by Cossack officers from Russia. Without entering into details about the organisation, pay, clothing, barracks, arms, &c., of the Persian army, I will confine myself to this one quotation, which gives in a few words the best qualities of the Persian soldiery: "The horsemen are good riders, and generally have ood hardy horses. The infantry and artillery soldiers are trong, and capable of enduring great fatigue. A march of 00 or 400 miles, at an average rate of 20 miles a-day, would e thought no extraordinary feat." Such men should be the aking of a very fine army. What they want is a set of mpetent and upright officers, and just treatment by the vernment they serve.

With regard to the Afghan military forces, the writer its that he bases his figures entirely on information ined from English sources. He says, "I am only treat-

ing here of the regular troops, trained and organised on the European system, and comparatively well armed. These troops are divided into three armies, thus distributed over Afghanistan: In the Kabul province, 17,600 infantry, 7300 cavalry, 106 guns; in the Herat province, 7300 infantry, 2800 cavalry, 50 guns; in Afghan Turkistan, 20,500 infantry, 6000 cavalry, 66 guns: total, 45,400 infantry, 16,100 cavalry, 222 guns."

To Englishmen, who are in the habit of regarding Herat as the key of India, it will be a surprise to learn that its garrison is less than two-thirds of that of Takht-i-pul, a fortress close to Balkh, regarded by the Afghans as almost impregnable. Yavorski, in his Memoirs of General Stolietoff's Mission to Kabul in 1878, gives an interesting description of the fortress of Takht-i-pul. Although the interest of the British public centres in Herat, and that city commands the route by which India is most easily accessible, the strength of the Afghan garrison north of the Hindu Kush and Band-i-Turkistan ranges proves that the Afghans are equally apprehensive of danger in that quarter. There are, in fact, four palpable motives for the strength of the garrison in Afghan Turkistan: firstly, that the line of frontier to be defended from Maimena on the west to Faizabad on the east, is very extended, and open to invasion not only by the ferries across the Oxus on the north, but from the Murghab valley to the west; secondly, that these khanates are mostly inhabited by Uzbeks, an alien and warlike race who require to be kept under control by a tight hand; thirdly, that the passes of the Hindu Kush being closed by snow during at least four months in the year, the permanent garrison must be, if possible, competent both to quell internal rebellion and resist foreign invasion; fourthly, that the direct line of advance from the north on Kabul is not *viâ* Herat, but *viâ* Balkh and Bamian. The last motive is one that must also influence the disposition and movements of the army of India.

In his enumeration of the strength of the armed forces of Afghanistan, the writer in the 'Journal des Sciences Mili-

taires' has made no mention of the irregular levies, albeit the Indian Government in its Afghan campaigns has ever found these to be its most formidable foes. In the event, however, of a Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan, the Russian generals will find—provided, of course, the Amir and his subjects prove faithful allies to England—that the Afghan guerillas are not an enemy that they can afford to ignore or despise.

APPENDIX I.

THE PANJDEH RACE MEETING,

21ST AND 22D MARCH 1885.

It was decided some days ago to get up some sports amongst the Turkomans (Saruks), and to leave them to manage it in their own fashion. Accordingly, all the headmen of the different sections were invited to the British camp on the 19th, and they were asked to draw up a programme of their own. 1000 *karans* (= about £33, 6s. 8d.) was the sum placed at their disposal for prizes. It was agreed that this was too much to spend in one day, so it was unanimously decided to have a two days' meeting.

The following programme was then drawn up. I should mention that Turkomans in ageing their horses do not count the first year; consequently what they call a two-year-old is in reality three.

For Horses. Three Races.

1.	Distance,	3000	paces.	Prize,	50	karans.[1]
2.	"	2000	"	"	40	"
3.	"	1000	"	"	30	"

For Colts three years old. Three Races.

1.	Distance,	1000	paces.	Prize,	30	karans.
2.	"	800	"	"	20	"
3.	"	500	"	"	15	"

For Colts two years old. Three Races.

1.	Distance,	800	paces.	Prize,	20	karans.
2.	"	600	"	"	15	"
3.	"	500	"	"	10	"

For Colts one year old.

1.	Distance,	500	paces.	Prize,	10	karans.

[1] One *karan* = 8d. at present rate of exchange.

Wrestling.

1. For men.	Prize,	10 karans.
2. " youths.	"	4 "
3. " boys.	"	2 "

Shooting.

Prize, Rs. 20. Distance to be fixed by the competitors.

Total for prizes, 276 *karans*. In addition to this, 50 *karans* was to be expended each day in the purchase of cloth and other trifles for casual prizes, leaving a balance of 176 *karans* for extras. How essential this reserve of funds was will be shown in the sequel.

At an early hour on the morning of the *Nauroz* (the New Year's Day of the Persians, Turkomans, and other Central Asian races, falling on the 21st March), the Saruk headmen began to assemble at the British camp, and before 9 o'clock all rode down with Captain Yate (Colonel Ridgeway left Panjdeh for Gulran on 20th March) to the ground, where the various distances had been marked out in a straight line from the winning-post by little heaps of sand. The first race brought four horses to the post, and the second and third three each. The jockeys were all boys, showing that the Turkoman fully understands the advantage o putting up a light weight. Some thousand odd Turkomans wer assembled, sitting and standing in double or treble rows close t the winning-post, or rather heap, opposite to which were seat in state all the *katkhudas* or headmen, with the *khalifa*, t *kazi*, and a number of *saiyads* and *mullas*, all of whom rank hi in the order of precedence by virtue of their religious calli The money for prizes was intrusted to the headman of Sukhtis (the largest, richest, and most powerful section of Saruks), Ak Muhammad by name, but always addressed by people by his title of Gúl Bátor. The giving of the prizes by no means the least arduous of the duties. The horse colt races, indeed the whole meeting, presented a scene of in excitement, enthusiasm, and—it must be admitted—conf that would shock the proprieties of British frequenters o turf. The starting-point of the longest race—being 3000 distant in a straight line from the winning-point—was of out of sight. The details of the start must therefore rest tery. Presently the four horses came in sight, excitemen apace, and the spectators (the clerks of the course and th were conspicuous by their absence, nor do I think th superhuman efforts would have curbed the eager throng to press forward all along the line. The four juvenile jo

seen riding all they knew (*i.e.*, *à la* Turkoman, but not exactly *à la* Fred Archer), their legs flying in all directions, and flogging away with all their might. Their whips are not straight and cutting like ours, but short-handled, with a long plaited leather lash, with which they cut behind them, striking the horse on the flanks. When not flogging, they whirled the whip round and round in the air. They had no idea of going straight, and many a race was lost by the horse running wide. There is no doubt that the Turkoman jockey might learn a thing or two by the study of Captain Horace Haye's essays on race-riding. Their translation into Turki is a desideratum. One race being just like another, no need to describe each in detail. The owners of the horses or colts running, invariably waited for and met them about a couple of hundred yards from home, and then rode in alongside of them, shouting and yelling with all their might. The winner at once turned his horse and galloped up to Gúl Bátor, who handed to him the prize-money, knotted in a bit of cloth. Waving this over his head, he then cantered his horse out to the end of the line of spectators, and then turning, galloped back again at full speed to the winning-heap, accompanied by the owner and a number of his friends or backers, all shouting and yelling like fiends. Such were the fixed races; but these constituted only half the fun. The time that elapsed between each race, while the horses were going out, was occupied by match after match. Couple after couple went out to race in for a couple of hundred yards or so, and every winner expected a prize—a *karan* or a piece of cloth, or some such trifle. If no two horses were forthcoming, one went out and raced himself in, equally demanding some recognition of his exertions in behalf of the general amusement. At odd times too, when no one else appeared on the arena, the public crier would have a run in all to himself, shouting and tossing his hat in the air, and not forgetting, you may rest assured, to come up for his *douceur*. Such a character, too, as he was! a little, wizened, toothless, old man, with a comical face, and eyes that looked as if they were hermetically sealed. One might almost have thought he had a peep-hole in the eyelids. Originally a slave, or the son of a slave captured in some foray, he had become, like many others, a Turkoman by adoption. In Panjdeh there are many such. Gúl Bátor's *naib* or deputy was originally a Persian slave captured in a raid. Now he is married and settled, and one of the leading men in Panjdeh. But to return to our races, or rather now our shooting-matches. These were commenced early in the day, independently of the horse-races. All the *mirgans*, as every footman (not a flunkey, but a man on foot) with a gun is called in this part of

the world, were collected at one spot, and very soon the shooting commenced. No idea of targets, much less of butts, ever entered their minds. In about two minutes the knuckle-end of an old bit of bone was stuck up on a bit of stick about 4 inches above the ground and some 120 yards from the firing-point. Then forthwith all the *mirgans* commenced firing indiscriminately; no roll, no calling out of names, no naming the man to fire. Every man just lies down on the ground, plants the two-pronged iron rest attached to his gun in the ground, and the moment the smoke clears sufficiently to let him see the object, takes aim and fires. The first man hitting the bone was to get the prize. How the men setting up the mark were not shot is a mystery. Hardly were their hands off the bone, than bang went a gun and a bullet whizzed within a few feet of them, not to mention all the small boys waiting to run in and hunt for old bullets. Bang! bang! goes on the fusilade, only a cessation at times for loading. At last a man hits the bone, up he jumps with a shout, tosses his cap in the air, and rushes off for the prize. I shall not easily forget my dilemma (I was looking on at one of those shooting-matches) when three men, each claiming to have hit the mark, and each backed up by a crowd of friends, rushed at me and thronged around me, each clamouring in louder and shriller Turki than the other. With some difficulty I induced the three claimants to divide the 20 *karans* between them.

When the horse-racing was over the wrestling commenced. At first only the most noted champions entered the arena, but ere long a score of couples were seen joining in the fray. Every one who threw his man promptly claimed a prize.

Then followed the camel-race, which was productive of any amount of fun and merriment, the camels rushing hither and thither through the crowd of onlookers, who surged forward on to the course, urging on the beasts with shouts and blows. The astonishing part of the business was that no one was trampled under foot by the excited animals.

After the meeting the Turkoman headmen all returned to the British camp to drink tea, and many of them spent the night there, their homes being at a considerable distance.

It seems doubtful if the second day of the Panjdeh *gymkhana* meeting ever came off. On the 23d March, authentic news of Komaroff's advance reached Panjdeh, and perhaps the rumours of it current on the 22d were so disquieting as to put a stop to all festive pastimes.

Turkoman horse-racing naturally leads to a few remarks on Turkoman horses. Ever since General Valentine Baker travelled in Northern Persia, some ten or twelve years ago, that portion of

the British, and especially of the Anglo-Indian public that takes any interest in horses, has been impressed with a firm belief that the Turkoman horse is a marvel. He states that in the races at Teheran, the Turkoman horse almost invariably beats the Arab. His evidence on this point directly controverts that of Mr Eastwick, for some time *chargé d'affaires* at the Shah's Court. The latter, in his book entitled 'A Diplomat's Residence in Persia,' gives a detailed account of a race meeting at Teheran, in which, to the best of my memory, five events were won by Arabs (distances varying from 2 to 12 miles), while one only—a race of medium length—was won by a Turkoman. As for the opinions about the Turkoman horse held by the members of the Afghan Boundary Commission, the strongest indication of their general tenor is the fact that scarce one of them cared to invest his money in them.[1] A few were bought at such low prices as £20, or £25 at the highest. Colonel Ridgeway was authorised by the Indian Government to give up to £300 for first-class Turkoman stallions for breeding purposes. Not a single stallion has been, to the best of my knowledge, bought, although they could have been readily obtained at much lower sums. The fact is, the Turkoman is not a well-shaped horse, at any rate to the British eye. Few of them have good shoulders, and they are all too long in the fore-leg. Experienced judges also say that they have too much length below the hocks. It may be that the Commission never saw a really fine Turkoman horse. However, as far as I am concerned, I like the look of the Karabagh horse, bred somewhere on the western frontier of Persia, and with an Arab strain in it, far better than that of the Turkoman.

APPENDIX II.

CAPTAIN YATE AT PANJDEH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'PIONEER,' *August* 1, 1885.

SIR,—I see that certain allegations are being now ventilated in the press against Captain Yate's conduct of affairs at Panjdeh. The most important, indeed the only important, allegation is the moot point whether he did or did not advise the Afghans to resist

[1] For Sir Peter Lumsden's opinion, see 'Proceedings of the Geographical Society' for September 1885, p. 567.

the world, were collected at one spot, and very soon the shooting commenced. No idea of targets, much less of butts, ever entered their minds. In about two minutes the knuckle-end of an old bit of bone was stuck up on a bit of stick about 4 inches above the ground and some 120 yards from the firing-point. Then forthwith all the *mirgans* commenced firing indiscriminately; no roll, no calling out of names, no naming the man to fire. Every man just lies down on the ground, plants the two-pronged iron rest attached to his gun in the ground, and the moment the smoke clears sufficiently to let him see the object, takes aim and fires. The first man hitting the bone was to get the prize. How the men setting up the mark were not shot is a mystery. Hardly were their hands off the bone, than bang went a gun and a bullet whizzed within a few feet of them, not to mention all the small boys waiting to run in and hunt for old bullets. Bang! bang! goes on the fusilade, only a cessation at times for loading. At last a man hits the bone, up he jumps with a shout, tosses his cap in the air, and rushes off for the prize. I shall not easily forget my dilemma (I was looking on at one of those shooting-matches) when three men, each claiming to have hit the mark, and each backed up by a crowd of friends, rushed at me and thronged around me, each clamouring in louder and shriller Turki than the other. With some difficulty I induced the three claimants to divide the 20 *karans* between them.

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It seems doubtful if the second day of the Panjdeh *gymkhana* meeting ever came off. On the 23d March, authentic news of Komaroff's advance reached Panjdeh, and perhaps the rumours of it current on the 22d were so disquieting as to put a stop to all festive pastimes.

Turkoman horse-racing naturally leads to a few remarks on Turkoman horses. Ever since General Valentine Baker travelled in Northern Persia, some ten or twelve years ago, that portion of

the British, and especially of the Anglo-Indian public that takes any interest in horses, has been impressed with a firm belief that the Turkoman horse is a marvel. He states that in the races at Teheran, the Turkoman horse almost invariably beats the Arab. His evidence on this point directly controverts that of Mr Eastwick, for some time *chargé d'affaires* at the Shah's Court. The latter, in his book entitled 'A Diplomat's Residence in Persia,' gives a detailed account of a race meeting at Teheran, in which, to the best of my memory, five events were won by Arabs (distances varying from 2 to 12 miles), while one only—a race of medium length—was won by a Turkoman. As for the opinions about the Turkoman horse held by the members of the Afghan Boundary Commission, the strongest indication of their general tenor is the fact that scarce one of them cared to invest his money in them.[1] A few were bought at such low prices as £20, or £25 at the highest. Colonel Ridgeway was authorised by the Indian Government to give up to £300 for first-class Turkoman stallions for breeding purposes. Not a single stallion has been, to the best of my knowledge, bought, although they could have been readily obtained at much lower sums. The fact is, the Turkoman is not a well-shaped horse, at any rate to the British eye. Few of them have good shoulders, and they are all too long in the fore-leg. Experienced judges also say that they have too much length below the hocks. It may be that the Commission never saw a really fine Turkoman horse. However, as far as I am concerned, I like the look of the Karabagh horse, bred somewhere on the western frontier of Persia, and with an Arab strain in it, far better than that of the Turkoman.

APPENDIX II.

CAPTAIN YATE AT PANJDEH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'PIONEER,' *August* 1, 1885.

SIR,—I see that certain allegations are being now ventilated in the press against Captain Yate's conduct of affairs at Panjdeh. The most important, indeed the only important, allegation is the moot point whether he did or did not advise the Afghans to resist

[1] For Sir Peter Lumsden's opinion, see 'Proceedings of the Geographical Society' for September 1885, p. 567.

deh. Had he succeeded in effecting his obj
might still be under British and Afghan influen
sians knew that, as long as a British represe
there, the Saruks would not finally come over t
may be attributed Colonel Alikanoff's resort to
unjustifiable measure of urging the Turkoma
British camp, and General Komaroff's extreme
sending the escort asked for. I would further ... who are disposed to place any credence in the insinuations of the correspondent of the 'Times of India,' that Captain Yate is "wanting in virtues of a positive and active character, and in qualities of the sterner sort" (what beautifully vague terminology!), to read once more the accounts that have appeared of the events at Panjdeh from 20th to 30th March, of the retreat from Panjdeh to Gulran, and of the disastrous march over the Au-safid Pass and its consequences. If after that any one will deny to Captain Yate the possession of "qualities of the sterner sort," &c. &c., then I am willing to admit that the "well-informed one" is better informed than I am. I further again repeat that what that "well-informed one" calls "the story of Panjdeh in outline" is at once inaccurate in points of detail, and deliberately omits all those facts that would make the version a true and not an absolutely one-sided one.

However, the main allegation against Captain Yate is, that he did advise the Afghans to resist the Russians by force of arms, and that he should not have done so. Now I desire first to ask why, if there was no intention of fighting, were the Afghans counselled, with the sanction of the Home Government—for Lord Granville in the House of Lords openly expressed his approval of General Lumsden's advice to the Afghans, and we know now that that advice was (at least ultimately) to oppose by armed force any further Russian encroachments—to send a force of, including irregulars, about 3000 men to Panjdeh? We find Lord Granville and Sir Peter Lumsden openly approving of armed resistance, and yet efforts are being made to impugn the judgment and discretion of a junior officer. As for that well-informed correspondent of the 'Times of India,' he argues that Captain Yate had no right to interpret the meaning of the agreement of the 16th March differently from General Komaroff; in fact, that he was virtually to take his instructions from the Russian Government. It has come to light ere this that Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville put on that agreement an interpretation that it could not possibly bear; but for that they, not Captain Yate, are responsible. He was furnished with the copy of an agreement purporting to stipulate that neither Russians

or Afghans should advance another step. The Afghans remained stationary, while Komaroff with 3000 men *advanced* from Hazrat Imam to Kizil-tapa (40 miles). Does any one still doubt that the Russians were wilful aggressors? Is any one so infatuated as to believe, after reviewing in his mind the conduct of the Russians from November to April last, that they would have been satisfied with anything short of an occupation of Panjdeh? Even Lord Granville, in correspondence published in the last Blue-book, charges the Russians with having wilfully and deliberately attacked the Afghans without provocation, and, what is more, refused to recede from that charge. When the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs maintains that the Afghans were within their rights, and that the collision was unjustifiably forced on by the Russians, is any one going to contend that Captain Yate, the British representative at Panjdeh, acting under Lord Granville's orders, was wrong in declining to accede to the Russian demand that the Afghans should entirely evacuate the left bank of the Khushk? He did all that a desire to avoid a collision—combined with the determination to exact from the Russians the respect due to the agreement of 16th March, as communicated by Lord Granville, and consistently with the Amir's orders to his generals to resist by force any further Russian advance—permitted of his doing. It is well known that the Saruks made him repeated offers of armed assistance against the Russians, and that he steadily discouraged any interference whatever on their part, strongly urging them to remain perfectly neutral. Worked upon, as the Saruks then were, by the strongest feelings of fear and excitement, it says not a little for the British representative that he succeeded in preventing them from taking any active part in the events of that time. When the Naib Salar received General Komaroff's ultimatum on the 29th, he and General Ghaus-ud-din had a long conversation with Captain Yate prior to his interview with Colonel Zakrchewski in the afternoon. In that conversation, as a matter of course, the Afghan generals told Captain Yate what the Amir's orders were, and what course they intended to adopt should the Russian general actually make his threatened attack. Having thus acquainted himself with their views, Captain Yate felt himself justified in stating, during his subsequent interview with Colonel Zakrchewski, that the Russian request for a complete evacuation of the left bank of the Khushk could not be complied with, although an arrangement might be come to about drawing in the Afghan vedettes. On the evening of the 29th he again conferred with the Afghan generals and Yalantush Khan, the Afghan Governor of Panjdeh. They all adhered firmly to their previous opinions that an evacuation of the left bank of the

Khushk without a resort to arms was inconsistent with the orders and with the maintenance of Afghan rule in Panjdeh will thus be seen that whatever Captain Yate's own views, on the instructions he had received and on the tenor of the agreement of 16th March as communicated by Lord Granville, were about the advisability of fighting or yielding tamely to a further demonstration of Russian aggressiveness, the collision at Panjdeh cannot be regarded as the outcome of his advice. On the contrary, in his communications with the Russian chief of the staff, his line of conduct was guided, not only by the instructions he received from his own Government, but also by the views of the Afghan generals. Had they consented to meet in conference the Russian officers, they would have been able to communicate personally their own views. But as they did not desire to do so, it devolved upon Captain Yate to act as their mouthpiece. General Lumsden had advised the Afghans to use force, and Lord Granville had openly approved that advice. Was Captain Yate to give counsel opposed to that of his superiors? I would, moreover, maintain that, in view of the agreement of 16th March, Captain Yate would have failed in his duty had he counselled any further tame concessions to the insolence and extravagance of Russian demands. General Komaroff advanced on Panjdeh with no other object than to so work on the fears of the Saruks that they would render the position of both British representative and Afghan troops in Panjdeh untenable. When he utterly failed both in that object and in his deliberate endeavours to provoke the Afghans to some act of violence, and in consequence found that the Turkomans in his camp were losing their respect for the Russian power, he was obliged to precipitate matters. Otherwise it is probable that he would have postponed for some time longer his attack, trusting to circumstances to aid him in gaining possession of Panjdeh without committing his Government to a flagrant breach of good faith. And now let us look at the results of the course of action or advice for which Captain Yate is blamed. Up to the 30th of March, when the Russians found themselves opposed by bullets and bayonets, their steady advance had in no way been checked by diplomatic remonstrances or suchlike half-hearted measures. But from that date the Russians have not advanced one step. The news of bloodshed and of a Russian onslaught on British allies, and almost on British officers, sufficiently roused the anger of the British nation to cause Russia to pause before she went further.

If the real reason why writers, *quasi* well-informed or otherwise, are now coming forward to censure the action of the [illegible] representative at Panjdeh is sought, it is to be found in the [illegible]

that Mr Gladstone and the Liberal Ministry have never uttered one word of commendation on the conduct of any member of the Afghan Boundary Commission, while the Czar and the Russian Government have, by the presentation of a diamond-hilted sword to General Komaroff and a free publication of all that officer's reports, shown their approval of, and belief in, the rectitude of his conduct. On the other hand, the late Liberal Government has suppressed all reports from General Lumsden and Captain Yate, and refrained from all comments on events with a persistency that, if it does not express dissatisfaction, implies it. It has been reserved for the new Ministry to show becoming appreciation of the services rendered to their country by Sir Peter Lumsden, G.C.B., and Sir Joseph West Ridgeway, K.C.S.I.

One Much Better Informed.

APPENDIX III.

THE RUSSO-PERSIAN FRONTIER.

1st August, S.S. Alexander III.—From Jajarm there is, I am told, a very picturesque route through Nardin and Findarask to Astrabad. It is also probably shorter than the Bastam route. Not all the inquiries, however, that I made about it at Jajarm, succeeded in eliciting any sound information. I only found one man who had actually traversed it, while scores had travelled by the other; and that I accepted as a convincing proof that there was some objection to it. With the Persians themselves, no doubt its proximity to the habitations of the Yomud Turkomans was the chief reason for avoiding it; but it was also said to be an exceedingly difficult road, traversing steep rocky passes over the mountain-ridges and rugged torrent-beds encumbered with stone and boulders. Furthermore, my muleteer would not guarantee my arrival by that route at Bandar-i-Gaz on the 30th ultimo, whereas by the Bastam route he undertook to catch the mail-steamer leaving on that date. So I resigned the promised beauties of scenery around Nardin and Findarask, and decided to follow the stereotyped road. Considering that the Yomuds were out on the war-path just at the time that I was leaving Jajarm, it is possibly as well for me that I did so. The neighbourhood of Jajarm appears to have been a favourite hunting-ground of the

Akhal Tekkes as well as the Yomuds. Around the few villages that exist on the barren tract between Jajarm and Bastam are still seen those towers that a few years ago were the refuge of the husbandman surprised in his fields. Of the raids of the Gauklan tribe of Turkomans I heard nothing. That tribe is much inferior in point of numbers to its neighbours on either side, the Akhal Tekke to the east and the Yomud to the west.

The Bastam route to Astrabad is, however, by no means wanting in beauty of scenery. The Bastam valley itself, fertile, cultivated, studded with villages and orchards, and girt around by a lofty barrier of rugged mountains, is a panorama worth looking at. From Tash (24 miles north-west of Bastam) onwards, the Elburz range, with its rocky summit, steep cypress-clad slopes, its valleys often green with patches of rich meadow or yellow with the tints of ripening grain, and its streams and springs of water icy-cold and rivalling crystal in transparency, and to the thirsty traveller tasting sweeter than the best of pegs, is crossed, and then the magnificent sylvan scenery of the northern slopes bursts upon the view. A few miles above the little hamlet of Kuzluk commences the descent into the Astrabad plain, and thence a very fine view both of the vast expanse of densely wooded spurs, relieved here and there by glimpses of scarp and cliff, and of the naturally rich but sadly neglected plain stretching towards the Gurgan river, is obtained. The descent, which is steep and difficult, cannot be less than six miles in length: After that the road proceeds with an even gentle fall towards Astrabad. For about 35 miles the traveller rides through a continuous expanse of forest; and be it in the bright sunlight of day or the more subdued radiance of the moon, the beauty of the effects, especially to one habituated to the aridity of the greater part of Afghanistan and Persia, cannot be over-praised. The forest extends to within a few miles of Astrabad, and again is traversed or skirted for the greater part of the journey from Astrabad to Bandar-i-Gaz, and very welcome is its shade under the mid-day sun's rays.

Baku, 3d August.—At Astrabad I was most hospitably entertained by the British news-writer, Mirza Taki Aka. The Russian Consul was away at his country-house up among the hills at Ziarat, 15 miles south of Astrabad. I should otherwise have called upon him and endeavoured to learn the latest news, though it is more than doubtful if he would have imparted anything worth knowing. At Astrabad again I heard the same reports of a recent collision between Russian and Afghan troops near Panjdeh, but by this time I have come to the conclusion it is all a mare's nest. On arrival at Gaz on the 30th, I went to the steam-

boat agent's house to make inquiries about the steamer for Baku. I was scarcely prepared for being welcomed by a lady and a largish family, and still less for being informed that I had been expected for a fortnight or more. My hostess, I fear, is a very indifferent diplomatic agent—not at all the type dear to the soul of the Russian intriguer. She let the cat out of the bag, firstly, by blurting out that she had expected me a fortnight before, and then made her thoughtless mistake worse by remarking that I must not let any one know that she had said my arrival was expected, as it was a secret. Anyhow, expected or not, I never received a kinder welcome and more hospitable treatment in my life. My host and hostess proved to be Poles, not Russians. Shortly after me a middle-aged lady arrived. In course of conversation it appeared that she had just come from the house of the Russian Consul at Ziarat, that she was French by nationality, that she was studying the silk industry in Persia, and that she was in the habit of living alone in Persian caravanserais. A woman who can do that can do anything. Towards evening my hostess suddenly, taking advantage of a quiet moment, informed me that her husband had been instructed by the Russian Consul at Astrabad to report immediately to him my arrival at and departure from Gaz, to keep a strict watch over my movements while there, and if opportunity offered to examine my baggage. Such dirty tricks, however, she said, were neither in her husband's line nor hers; and therefore, as far as they were concerned, I need be under no apprehensions. But with regard to this Frenchwoman in the silk trade fresh from the Russian Consul's house, and the courier of the Consulate with her, she knew absolutely nothing, and she could only advise me to be on my guard against them. Finding that the courier's baggage was in the same room as mine I had it promptly turned out, and I made my servant remain near my room during my absence—not that I had any papers of importance, unless a diary and road report can be called such. I had carefully sent all my papers to India from the Commission camp, knowing the habits of the Russian authorities, and feeling that any one coming from the Commission must be regarded in Russia with suspicion. I had looked for a very stringent examination of my baggage; but to my surprise yesterday, I was merely asked to unlock my boxes, and then informed that I might remove them.

The heat of the last five days exceeds all the heat I have experienced since I left Rindli last September—a damp, clinging heat, which lasted from the time I descended from Kuzluk to the level of the Astrabad plain till yesterday morning, when I found myself in the centre of the Caspian, half-way between Krasnovodsk and

Baku. Here again the heat is very great and the dust abominable. We passed both Ashurada, Chikishlar, and Krasnovodsk at night, so I saw nothing of them. Ashurada is described as a low island covered with vegetation and trees, and so little above the surface of the water that all the houses have to be raised on wooden beams above the water-level. There is a large hospital and sanatorium there for the Caspian marine, and indeed seemingly for any Russian subjects dwelling on or near the Caspian. There is also an arsenal and dockyard. Chikishlar is a military station on the bare flat shore. Vessels of any draught cannot approach the land. There is no harbour. Krasnovodsk is a harbour in a small bay, along the shores of which lie the town, barracks, &c. Behind the town rises a range of hills. There is a massive roomy wooden pier, alongside which vessels are moored for loading and unloading. A branch line of rail is, it is said, about to be constructed from Mikhailovsk to a point on the coast where there is a good harbour, just opposite Krasnovodsk. Judging by the large number of officials, not to mention ladies and children, who came on board the steamer on its arrival, it must be a station of some size. Baku—even since I was here in 1881—seems to have greatly increased in extent and population; the streets are more crowded, and on the north side have been completed and still further extended. The reputed smell of petroleum is, I must confess, absent, but it is a fearful place to live in. The native inhabitants in their dirt, squalor, and depravity, are repulsive. The glare and dust are alike blinding. The architectural remains of the old Persian town are decidedly worth looking at. They completely put to shame the buildings of the modern Russian town. Of course Baku is nothing without its petroleum, and any visitor who has a taste for bad smells and machinery can amply gratify them here. For my part, I prefer to give them a wide berth. As for the sanctuary of the Guebres (*Gabr*), it can only be visited with much toil and suffering from heat, dust, and glare. Any person who is enthusiastic about Zoroastrian remains will find it better to hunt for and study them in Persia, the home of the Zoroastrian religion.

When I passed Bujnurd on the 23d ultimo, Suleiman Khan, the Persian Commissioner for the demarcation of the Russo-Persian frontier, was there. He is, I understand, on his way to Astrabad, to meet his Russian colleague later on near the mouth of the Atrek. I am informed that the frontier has been settled from Sarakhs to the outskirts of the Bujnurd province. Thence to the Caspian is still only partially settled—*i.e.*, the section from the province of Bujnurd to Chat on the Atrek is

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north-east by the Kopet-Dagh chain up to the Arvaz Pass. Thence it goes south, traverses the Suluku Pass and the crest of the Misino mountain, and next eastward one verst from the Persian village of Rabab to the Persian village of Kheirabad, skirting the Dolontcha chain. Again going north-east, the line touches the gorge of the river Firuza on the north of a village of the same name. Then going south-east, it runs across the summit of *Gulil and the Gaisch, Gunduk and Berdar mountains, through the* Gudan defile, to reach the crest of Kukar. After this it passes by the Asselma chain and descends into the Keltechinar gorge. Keltechinar village belongs to Persia, while the Annau defile, with its southern exit, is Russia's. From this point the line passes above the Kizil-Dagh hills to the Persian village of Senghi Sourakh, reaches the eastern spur of Kizil-Dagh hills, and then runs north over the Ziri-Ku chain until it issues into the valley of the Baba Durmaz stream. It then takes a northerly direction, and reaches the oasis at the road from Gavars to Luftabad, leaving the fortress Baba Durmaz on the east. That portion of the frontier from the Caspian Sea to the sources of the Baba Durmaz is 600 versts long.

"In order to grasp the value of this addition to our trans-Caspian possessions, it is well to consider the character of the people and the country, as well as the geographical position of the territory. The first section of this frontier is formed by the course of the Atrek river, starting from the Caspian Sea to the Songou-Dagh range. This section borders on the Persian province of Astrabad. The second section is formed by the Sumbar and Chandir valleys up to the Misino range. The third section runs as far as the end of the Ziri-Ku range. The country east of the Caspian Sea, as far as the Songou-Dagh up to the Black river, presents the appearance of a desert cut from east to west by two nearly parallel rivers—the Atrek and the Gurgan. The Atrek runs for some portion of its length through a deep ravine with scarped sides. The actual width of the bed of the river does not exceed fifteen *sagines*, but the ravine is some quarter of a mile or so across. In flood-time the Atrek can only be crossed at one or two places; but thanks to the rapidity of the current, floods never last long.

"The river at one point flows into a marsh close to the Ashkabad road. In spring and early summer the marsh is flooded; but to a slight depth only, as the actual bed of the river is no more than three or four feet deep. The water of the Atrek is usually muddy, slightly saline, and unfit for use. That portion of the river between Chat and the Gudri Pass cannot be diverted for

irrigation, as the valley through which it runs resembles a ravine. Agriculture in this region then is impossible, and there is an absolute lack of vegetation of all kinds by reason of the burning sun and the absence of rain between April and November. Only in spring-time does a little grass appear; and this, withered and burnt up as it is, serves as pasture for the flocks of the Turkomans. In its lower reaches the Atrek, after leaving the Gudri narrows, keeps its waters in one bed, but at Bend the river splits into several branches. In spring-time there is water in all these tributaries which can be diverted at will into the other streams throughout the rest of the year; and from this point onward the Atrek flows with no sort of regularity. At the present time it is keeping to its southern bed, and falls into the Caspian at the Hassan Kuli Gulf. The left bank of the river is a mere salt-marsh which cannot be turned to profit; but on the right bank there are places which the Turkomans plough and sow. There are not many fords on the river, owing to the marshiness of the lower lengths, and the steepness of its ravine-like banks by Gudri. The best ones are at Sergher, Tepe, Gudri, Yagly-Oluma, Tekendjik, and Chat. Generally speaking, the frequent recurrence of the ravines through which the river runs renders any attempt to cross the river, except at the places I have mentioned, nearly impossible. The country south of the Atrek is simply a waterless desert. All the western portion of the trans-Caspian province, from the Caspian to Kizil-Arvat and the Chandir river eastwards, and from the Balkhan mountains to the Black river, north and south, is inhabited by the Yomuds and Goklans—nomad Turkomans. The Yomuds live near the Caspian, and the Goklans more in the heart of the country. At the mouth of the Atrek, on the right bank, are a few permanently settled Yomuds busied in agriculture. Further, there are some 500 *kibitkas* of Ak-Atabai Yomuds, a poor people, who also have taken to agriculture, and are settled between the Bend dyke and the Gudri defile. On the banks of the Gurgan there is yet another colony of 800 *kibitkas* of the same race; but with these three exceptions, the rest of the population are nomads. Many of the nomads, however, possess land on the Persian side of the frontier, and go there to get in their crops. These men spend nine months of the year in our territory, and the other three in the Gurgan district, where the weather is warmer, and there is more provision and pasture.

"In this section of our frontier, Persian authority does not extend beyond the Black river. The farthest point of their rule is the Ak-Kala fort on the Gurgan, about 70 versts from

valleys of the Sumbar and Chandir are important acquisitions to our trans-Caspian province, as they will induce the migratory Turkomans to settle down and become cultivators—a thing which is much to be desired in the interests of the peace and prosperity of the country. From the sources of the Sumbar, the frontier line scales the heights of the Kopet-Dagh ranges, and reaches in the south the Misino mountains. The Kopet-Dagh range, which is 8000 feet high, is difficult of access. The line passes by the Suluku defile and comes out at Hermab [Germab?]. The western portion of the road is fairly easy to travel, which is certainly not the case with the eastern portion. In the Kulun-Kalassi-Su valley, 20 versts south of the Sumbar, one comes across the first Persian village [Mehscedi Kulaman], a hamlet of 150 families, close upon our frontier. There is another village Suluku; but this is only a few years old, and does not include more than 40 families. All along this line of frontier, from the Misino hills to the eastern spur of the Ziri-Ku chain, we find ourselves in contact with the first important Persian authorities, the Khans of Koohan and Daraghaz.

"Here the frontier includes the larger portion of the mountain-ranges which separate the Akhal basin from the sources of the Kokhan. The upper portion of the Akhal, near Firuza and Keltechinar, is assigned to Persia.

"From the Misino hills the frontier line passes just in front of the Kurd village of Rabab, and the road which leads to Hermab from the Rabab defile is only accessible to mules. The Hermab and Kulkulab villages, both highly cultivated ones, belong to us; and Hermab is connected with Geok-tepe by a road fit for wheeled conveyances. The Hermab and Kulkulab rivers water the Tekke villages grouped round the old fort of Geok-tepe. Coming from the Rabab defile, the frontier line passes just in front of Kheirabad—a Kurd village 5000 feet above the level of the sea, where the night frosts begin as early in the year as August. This village stands at the joining-point of the Hermab and Firuza roads. The former, though rough and rocky, is as easy as the Rabab defile; and the latter could be turned into a carriage-road. From Kheirabad there are several roads into Persia. Beyond Kheirabad the frontier line goes east, then north-east not far from the Firuza defile; finally reaching the Firuza river itself, which flows through a rocky gorge as far as the village of Firuza—one mile from our frontier. The fields on our side of the line are watered by an offshoot of the Akhal river. Firuza itself is connected with Ashkabad by carriage-road 30 versts.

"Passing along the right bank of the Firuza, our frontier runs up to the top of the Gulil hill, an elevation of 9000 feet; then follows the Gaisch and Gunduk chains up to where the latter joins the Berdar hills. Thence, from the top of Nakdow, the line comes down the Gudan Pass to Buzbelk. This part of our frontier lies all the way along mountain-tops, where the only roads are a few hill-paths open only in summer. The Gudan defile is a plateau some three versts long by one broad, across which run the Ashkabad, Durb-Adam, and Koohan roads. The first of these roads is the main line of communication between Ashkabad and Mashhad, and there is some talk of improving it.

"Going along the Gudan defile, the frontier line ascends to the top of the Kukar mountain, and thence runs along the Aselma range, to drop eventually into the valley of the Keltechinar stream. For the last quarter of a century there has been a village of Annaouli Turkomans by that stream. Here both of the Akhal roads meet, run through the Geok-Gadyk and Durangar defile, and thence go to Mohammedabad and Koohan. The frontier touches the valley of the Durangar river, after crossing the Kizil-Dagh cliffs at their eastern spur near the Senghi Sourakh Gorge; then goes north as far as the junction of the Kizil-Dagh range with the Ziri-Ku hills.

"The Ziri-Ku chain, which our frontier line cuts south-easterly, is inaccessible except by the bed of the Baba-Durmaz, whence it is possible to drop down into the Durangar valley. At this point we find ourselves in the Atrek facing towards Khorasan. Here, in 1884, the land and irrigation was divided equally between the inhabitants of the Atrek and the Persian inhabitants of the frontier khanate of Daraghaz and Kelat."

According to the lecturer, the new frontier assures to Russia the following advantages: The Akhal Tekke oasis is prolonged to the borders of the trans-Caspian province, and forms with it only one administrative division. Although several of the rivers in the Russian territory have their rise in Persia, the Akhal Tekke and Atrek have enough water in them to assure the development of the country, while the Sumbar and Chandir rivers are Russia's. The new delimitation brings peace on the border, inasmuch as it has put an end to nomad raiding; and when the local population have settled down, they will not fail to develop the prosperity of the country.

Referring to the lecturer's work, the 'Caucase' observes that, in accepting the delimitation of the frontier, Persia, for her own part, had only peace and good government in her mind. Both contracting parties sought purely pacific ends, and now the two

Governments are working in union to improve the Geok-tepe, Schersan and Koohan, and the Ashkabad-Mashhad lines.

The demarcation of the Russo-Persian frontier was effected with extraordinary despatch, and without the smallest misunderstanding—which brilliant result may be accounted for, thinks the 'Caucase,' by the fact that the work was carried out by the parties directly interested, without the intervention of any third person.

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